

**FURTHER TO WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD MEETING #5/04
To be held Friday, September 17, 2004**

Pages

7. SECTION I - ITEMS FOR AUTHORITY ACTION

LISTED ON AGENDA AS REPORT TO FOLLOW

7.10 GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

52-58

TO: Chair and Members of the Watershed Management Advisory Board
Meeting #5/04, September 17, 2004

FROM: Adele Freeman, Acting Director, Watershed Management Division

RE: GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

KEY ISSUE

Provide comments to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal on the discussion paper "A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe".

RECOMMENDATION

THE BOARD RECOMMENDS TO THE AUTHORITY THAT WHEREAS the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (herein "Growth Plan") is an important step towards the Sustainable Communities objective of The Living City in that both seek to promote a "smart growth" model of compact urban development that conserves natural resources and energy while promoting increased use and availability of efficient public transit;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) advise the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal that TRCA supports the general directions of the growth plan;

THAT to avoid undermining the intent of the Growth Plan, the province consider increasing both the target for intensification and not permitting urban boundary expansions within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for a period greater than 5 years, unless the target and other proposed criteria have been met;

THAT the province consider increasing the time horizon for the Growth Plan to beyond 30 years and that the additional projected population growth beyond a 30 year planning horizon be contained within urban growth boundaries established in accordance with environmental carrying capacities identified through watershed plans;

THAT the province consider a growth management strategy that would prevent any new or expanded lake-based water and sewer infrastructure (excluding infrastructure approved but as yet unbuilt or infrastructure required to address serious health or environmental concerns) from being extended onto or over the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM);

THAT a growth management plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe recognize the importance of locally significant natural heritage systems in supporting the ecological integrity of provincially significant features and areas and that as intensification and redevelopment of existing urban areas occurs, an expanded and enhanced natural heritage system will be required for long-term sustainability to withstand the use and pressures of a projected population growth of an additional 3 million people;

THAT financial tools, incentives and standards, similar to those proposed for brownfields redevelopment and intensification, be developed to encourage the private sector and assist municipalities in the enhancement of local natural heritage systems, implementation of "green infrastructure" such as stormwater management retrofits and the use of green building technologies that reduce energy consumption and improve air quality, including provisions for renewable energy sources, as part of a comprehensive plan to reduce the impacts from and rate of climate change;

THAT TRCA support the coordination of the environmental assessment and land-use planning process to ensure the protection of local natural heritage systems and that the consideration of alternatives reflects emerging technologies, innovative designs and especially an appropriate balance of roads and transit;

AND FURTHER THAT this report be circulated for information to TRCA's watershed municipalities and conservation authorities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe study area.

BACKGROUND

In mid-July, the Province of Ontario released a discussion paper titled "Places to Grow: Better Choices. Brighter Future. A Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe". The document outlines a strategy and identifies tools for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) over the next 30 years, where 3 million new residents are expected to settle. The document provides proposed directions for provincial and municipal decisions on a range of growth-related issues such as urban development and land use planning, capital investment planning, housing, transportation and environmental infrastructure and economic development. This document is one component of several provincial initiatives to manage the growth and prosperity of Ontario's communities, and also includes the Golden Horseshoe (GH) Greenbelt Plan, source water protection and planning reform, among others.

SUMMARY OF THE GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

The document addresses four primary topics:

- 1) Where and How to Grow;
- 2) Infrastructure to Support Growth;
- 3) Protecting What is Valuable; and
- 4) Implementation.

1) Where and How to Grow

The document identifies the redevelopment of brownfield and greyfield sites and intensification along higher order transit corridors within urban areas as key opportunities to contain much of the anticipated growth within existing urban boundaries. The review of existing and new financial tools and incentives and the development of standards for greenfield development are some of the strategies proposed to achieve this form of compact urban growth. Priority Urban Centres (PUC) are identified as the location where much of the growth should be accommodated through redevelopment opportunities. PUC within TRCA watersheds include: Downtown Toronto Waterfront, Yonge-Eglinton Centre, North York Centre and the Brampton City Centre. Emerging Urban Centres (EUC) identified within TRCA watersheds include: Scarborough Centre, Markham Centre, Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway and Downtown Pickering. Approximately one third of all identified PUC and EUC are located within TRCA

watersheds. Strategies to encourage growth within these areas include exploring and developing innovative financial tools and incentives, the development of standards and performance measures for urban centres, including density targets, and establishing the GH Greenbelt to clearly delineate areas off limits to urban growth.

The report also notes that it may be necessary to consider expansions to urban boundaries in some areas, including the areas of the GTA that are south of the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) and outside of the proposed Greenbelt. Map 4 shows this conceptually as a rounding out of the existing urban boundaries, leaving a thin strip of potential greenbelt lands south of the ORM. A number of criteria are proposed that would need to be satisfied prior to any expansion of urban boundaries within the next five years, including that 40% of projected growth is accommodated through intensification, natural heritage systems are planned for and protected and appropriate consideration is given to source water protection.

2) Infrastructure to Support Growth

The document proposes to establish new approaches to infrastructure planning such as optimizing the use of existing infrastructure and establishing a more integrated transportation network. A 10-year Strategic Infrastructure Investment Plan is currently under development by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (PIR). Strategies are identified for moving goods and people, such as building urban transit, including new inter-regional systems and strengthening the GO rail system, plus a network of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. Map 5 shows conceptually a future inter-regional transit link between Barrie and the GTA through the proposed Highway 427 corridor. Map 6 shows conceptually a future "economic corridor" along the existing urban boundary in York and Peel regions extending from near Highway 400 westwards through Guelph to Kitchener/Waterloo. Sustainable water and wastewater services are given special mention as necessary supports to growth, including the need for strategies to develop methods of treating stormwater and combined sewer overflows, new controls on regulating water takings and assessing the assimilative capacities of receiving water bodies.

3) Protecting What is Valuable

This section of the document largely recaps existing ongoing initiatives such as the proposed greenbelt plan, source water protection, the Nutrient Management Act and other existing legislation. The report notes that greenspace systems are an integral part of the regional fabric which contributes to the quality of life of residents, and that protection is required for significant natural heritage features as well as broader systems such as the Lake Ontario Waterfront, ORM and Niagara Escarpment. As in the greenbelt report, certain agricultural lands (including the Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve) and mineral aggregate resources are also identified as requiring long term protection.

4) Implementation: Moving Forward

The document notes that a provincial facilitator will be appointed to assist on issues arising as the growth plan is implemented. Additionally, a "blue ribbon" panel will be established to monitor and advise on implementation of the plan. Possible planning implementation tools include upper tier official plans, community improvement plans and a development permit system. Planning reform, including Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) reform and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) update are other means already ongoing. Provincial legislation is suggested as a possible means to ensure compliance with the Growth Plan. A number of possible fiscal implementation tools are also suggested such as life-cycle pricing, tax increment financing, property tax reform and others. The development and monitoring of

community livability and sustainability indicators are suggested to assess the effectiveness of growth plan implementation.

TRCA STAFF ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON THE GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE

The document integrates and discusses many of the planning and development issues of concern in the GTA over the past decade. It is, however, fairly general in nature, and relies on many strategies yet to be developed and many tools yet to be explored and evaluated. Together with other recent provincial initiatives such as planning reform and a greenbelt plan, it does deliver a sense that the issues are now going to be seriously investigated and a coordinated action plan adopted. The Growth Plan, though general in nature, is an important step towards the Sustainable Communities objective of The Living City. Both the Growth Plan and The Living City seek to promote "smart growth" models of compact urban development that conserve natural resources and energy while promoting increased use and availability of efficient public transit. In that regard staff recommend that TRCA generally support the directions of the Growth Plan.

There are, however, several areas in which staff believe the directions of the document should be strengthened, such as: 1) in setting timelines and targets for the ratio of greenfield development vs development within existing urban boundaries; 2) the time horizon for the overall Growth Plan; 3) geographical restrictions to the expansion of new lake-based sewer and water infrastructure; 4) recognition that intensification will require planning for a more robust natural heritage system; 5) adding to the list of topics needing to be implemented through new financial tools and standards, additional topics such as enhanced green infrastructure, green building technology and energy efficiency; and 6) requiring better integration and coordination of the land use planning process with the environmental assessment process.

The Growth Plan provides several case studies of the ratio of greenfield development to development through intensification in existing urban areas. Sydney, Australia recently adopted a target requiring 75% of new dwellings to be built within existing urban areas while allowing for 25% as greenfield development. A new national target for the United Kingdom is to build 60% of new dwellings on previously developed land by 2008. The target of the Vancouver Regional District's strategic plan is to capture 70% of growth by 2021 in the growth concentration areas. In contrast, the GGH Growth Plan sets a target of a minimum of only 40% of projected growth to be met through infill and intensification. Further, this is one of the criteria that would permit urban boundary expansions in GTA municipalities within the next 5 years, even as the Growth Plan states that most municipalities have sufficient land designated to accommodate urban growth in the GGH for the next 15 to 25 years, even without implementing compact urban form measures. Clearly, the proposed target and timeline needs to be strengthened so as not to undermine the intent of the Growth Plan. TRCA staff recommend increasing both the target for intensification and not permitting urban boundary expansions within the GTA for a period greater than 5 years, unless the target and other proposed criteria have been met.

With respect to the 30 year time horizon of the Growth Plan, this is only marginally greater than most regional official plans within the GTA. The document specifically references an approximately 40 year horizon for Highway 407 from planning to implementation. It also notes that Waterloo Region has a 40 year Growth Management Strategy. Therefore, to avoid simply duplicating municipal official plans and to provide true provincial leadership in this exercise, a time horizon for the Growth Plan of greater than 30 years should be considered. Further, no indication is provided as to how to accommodate additional population growth beyond the 30 year horizon of the Growth Plan. Environmental modelling undertaken through watershed plans to be conducted over the next few years will provide guidance as to the environmental carrying capacity of lands within the GGH to accommodate additional urban growth. This may establish significant environmental constraints to urban boundary expansions within GTA watersheds, and the Growth Plan should account for the potential need to accommodate projected population growth beyond the 30 year planning horizon within the urban boundaries established for the 30 year plan.

To ensure that future urban growth within GTA municipalities unfolds as proposed in the Growth Plan, the province should consider a specific policy/strategy that would not permit any new or expanded lake-based water and sewer infrastructure to be extended onto or over the Oak Ridges Moraine (this would **not** apply to approved but as yet unbuilt infrastructure or infrastructure required to address serious health or environmental concerns). Such a policy would support the implementation of the Growth Plan by ensuring that sewer and water system funding contributes to the optimization of existing infrastructure, concentrates new growth in Priority Urban Centres and Emerging Urban Centres and minimizes the impacts to environmental features and groundwater resources.

The Growth Plan suggests that for future growth areas, especially for urban boundary expansions, a number of criteria should be met, including demonstrating that the environmental capacity, particularly sustainable water-taking, to support the projected growth is available and that natural heritage systems have been planned for and protected. This supports the proposed revisions to the PPS that would promote watershed studies being conducted prior to urban expansions. The wording, however, should be strengthened to recognize that simply protecting existing natural heritage features is not sufficient to ensure the long-term sustainability of a robust natural heritage system. TRCA's draft Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy clearly demonstrates that given the projected population growth, even if the currently existing natural heritage system is maintained, it will continue to decline in quality as urban development occurs. Through watershed planning exercises, municipalities must be able to identify, protect and enhance locally significant natural heritage systems as the connecting links between and among the protected provincially significant features, which function as the anchors of local systems. Similarly, as intensification and redevelopment within existing urban areas occurs, the existing natural heritage system also needs to be enhanced and augmented to withstand the use and pressures from the projected population growth and servicing requirements of an additional 3 million people. The Growth Plan speaks to "minimizing" or "mitigating" environmental impacts of infrastructure expansion but staff hold the opinion that a much more proactive approach is necessary, such as the protection and restoration of additional lands as compensation for losses to the natural heritage system. The

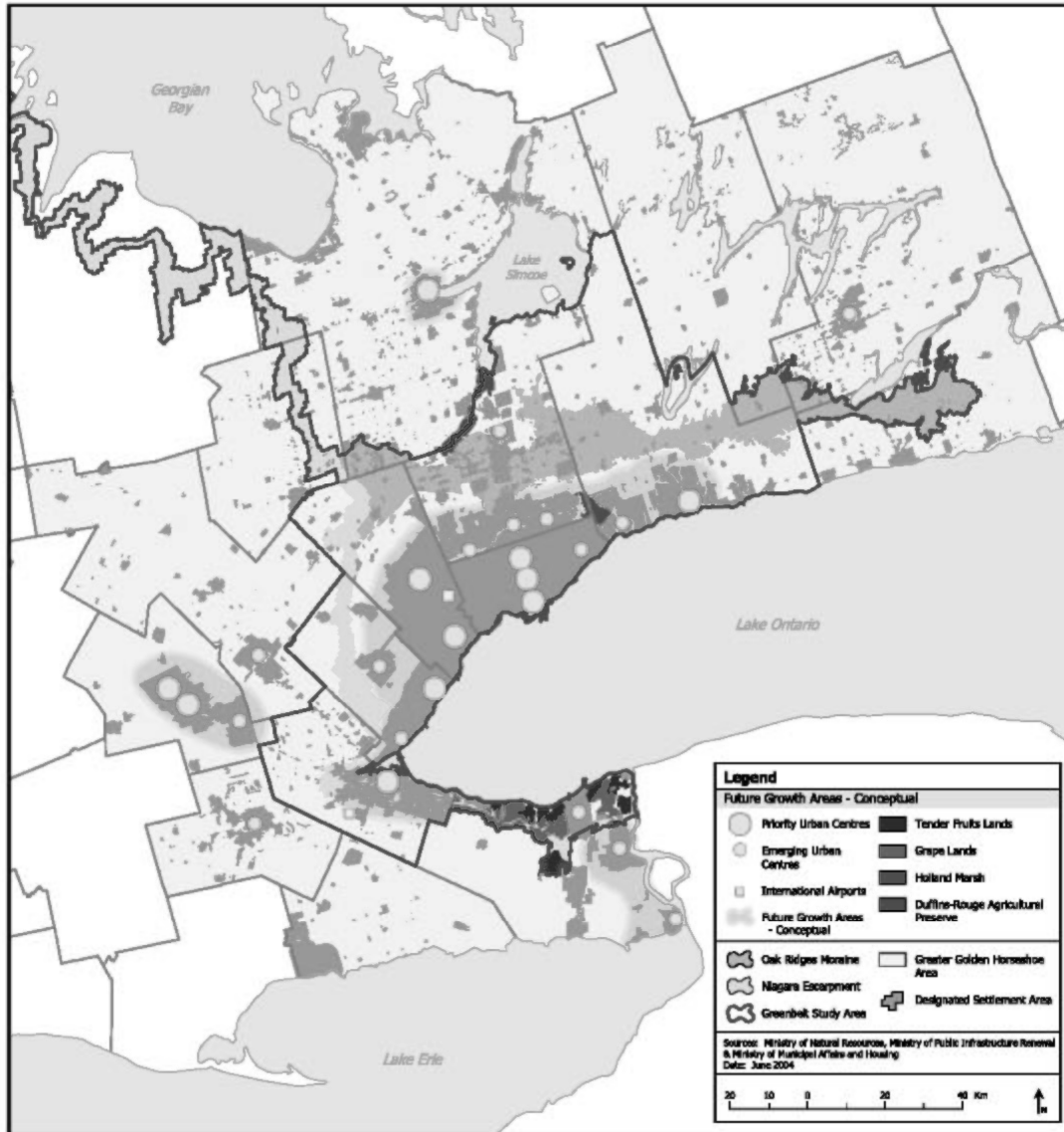
mapping and policy framework included in TRCA's draft Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy provide an example of a proactive approach to achieving a robust natural heritage system. Staff note the reference to the Seaton lands in the Growth Plan and observe that it can serve as a good model for planning urban growth within an effective and appropriate natural heritage system.

The Growth Plan identifies a number of possible strategies for promoting intensification and compact development in PUCs, including changes to the Development Charges Act to encourage and provide incentives for compact urban form as well as the development of standards and performance measures for urban centres, such as transit ridership, density targets and others. Staff suggest that the Development Charges Act could be amended to also permit the collection of funding for the enhancement of "green infrastructure", natural heritage system lands enhancement and for implementing energy efficiency programs. Significant financial assistance and incentives will be needed by municipalities to enable implementation of projects to protect and enhance water quality (such as source water protection and wet weather flow projects) and to prepare for and mitigate the potential impacts of climate change (such as stormwater management retrofits and the enhancement of local natural heritage systems). Additionally, the list of standards and performance measures for urban centres should be expanded to include energy efficiency and the use of green building technologies, including provisions for renewable energy sources and conservation measures. Rating systems such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) provide excellent examples of guidelines that promote improved standards in new building technology. This should be further supported as one of the "complementary investment" areas, similar to transit system investments to support compact urban form, and funding should be allocated in the budget of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal to advance this direction.

The Growth Plan identifies as one of its strategies for effectively managing future growth the coordination of the environmental assessment process, the land-use planning process and infrastructure planning to ensure that appropriate infrastructure capacity is in place to support planned growth. While staff acknowledge the importance of this strategy for the reasons provided, staff experiences lead us to support the strategy for entirely different reasons. TRCA experience has been that land use changes have been approved in advance of the environmental assessment process, thus leading to the necessity of approving environmental assessments for infrastructure to service the development, no matter the environmental costs, and often resulting in the loss and degradation of portions of the local natural heritage system. Better integration and coordination of the land-use planning process and environmental assessment (EA) process, particularly for transportation planning, is urgently needed to ensure the sustainability of communities offering a high quality of life. Additionally, the consideration of alternatives through the EA process needs to reflect emerging technologies, innovative designs and especially an appropriate balance of roads and transit.

Report prepared by: David Burnett, extension 5361
For Information contact: David Burnett, extension 5361
Date: September 16, 2004
Attachments: 1

PLACES TO GROW
 Better choices. Brighter Future.
 A GROWTH PLAN
 for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
 Discussion Paper, Summer 2004



Map 4 : Future Growth Areas - Conceptual