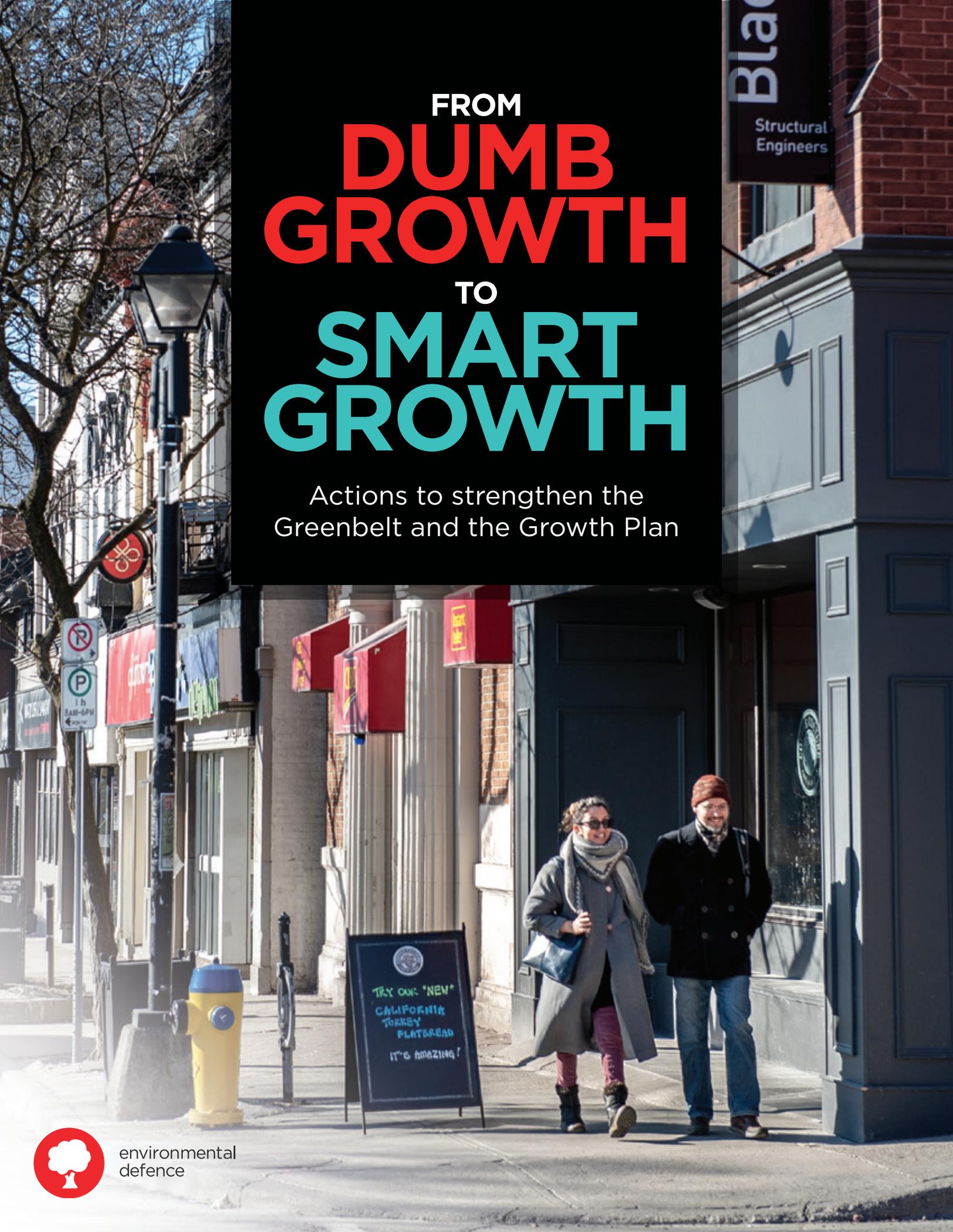


FROM DUMB GROWTH TO SMART GROWTH

Actions to strengthen the
Greenbelt and the Growth Plan



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE is Canada's most effective environmental action organization. We challenge, and inspire change in government, business and people to ensure a greener, healthier and prosperous life for all.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 1950s, when the car was king, far-flung auto-dependent communities sprang up across the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. We've learned a lot since then. We know now that old-style sprawl left us with huge municipal, infrastructure and personal debts, degraded our health, and paved over some of our best farmland and forests.

Some want to keep this outdated model. But many leaders in our communities know that if we don't change our approach to growth, we risk our health, our economy and our climate.

There is a better way forward. The good news is that a road map for change exists and we have started in the right direction. We can build walkable, transit-friendly communities that are better for our environment, health, and wallets. Ontario's Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe are award-winning steps in the right direction.¹ They work together to protect our farmland and forests while encouraging smarter, more efficient cities and towns. With improvements, they can guide us to a better future.

We can build walkable, transit-friendly communities that are better for our environment, health, and wallets.

If these plans are properly implemented, you'll see small towns reinvigorated with more mid-rise developments located near rapid transit. In our cities, empty industrial areas and parking lots will be replaced by new mixed use developments, adding density and vitality. In the countryside, hamlets will stay hamlets and farmers will be able to keep farming. Together, these approaches will create vibrant communities where most of us want to live.

Building more compactly facilitates better services like regional and local rapid transit, which can improve residents' quality of life because more of us can move between work, school and home faster. This means we can spend more time doing things we like, instead of being stuck in traffic, wasting time and money while polluting the air and damaging our climate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend the following actions to strengthen the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan:

- 1 Support efficient growth in urban growth centres by enforcing targets for intensification while aligning growth with existing water, transit, road and sewer capacity in towns and villages outside of the urban growth centres.
- 2 Address climate change by putting a meaningful price on carbon that will reduce our emissions, create a fund for public transit and provide incentives for energy efficient buildings and green infrastructure.
- 3 Freeze the urban boundary expansion for the next 10 years. There is more than enough land set aside by municipalities to accommodate the growth forecasted population for the Greater Golden Horseshoe beyond 2031. We don't need to keep sprawling over our farmland.
- 4 Expand the Greenbelt to include additional prime agricultural land and natural heritage systems and ensure complete mapping of these systems for the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- 5 Better align the Growth Plan with the Big Move transit plan objectives permitting higher densities within 2 km of transit hubs in urban growth centres and provide multiple ways to access transit hubs, including cycling, walking and driving.
- 6 Foster healthy communities by requiring active transportation plans in urban growth centres.
- 7 Improve the flow of people and goods across the region by prioritizing investment in transit, rail, and existing highways over new highways so that the transportation network will better serve and reinforce smart growth rather than sprawl.

INTRODUCTION

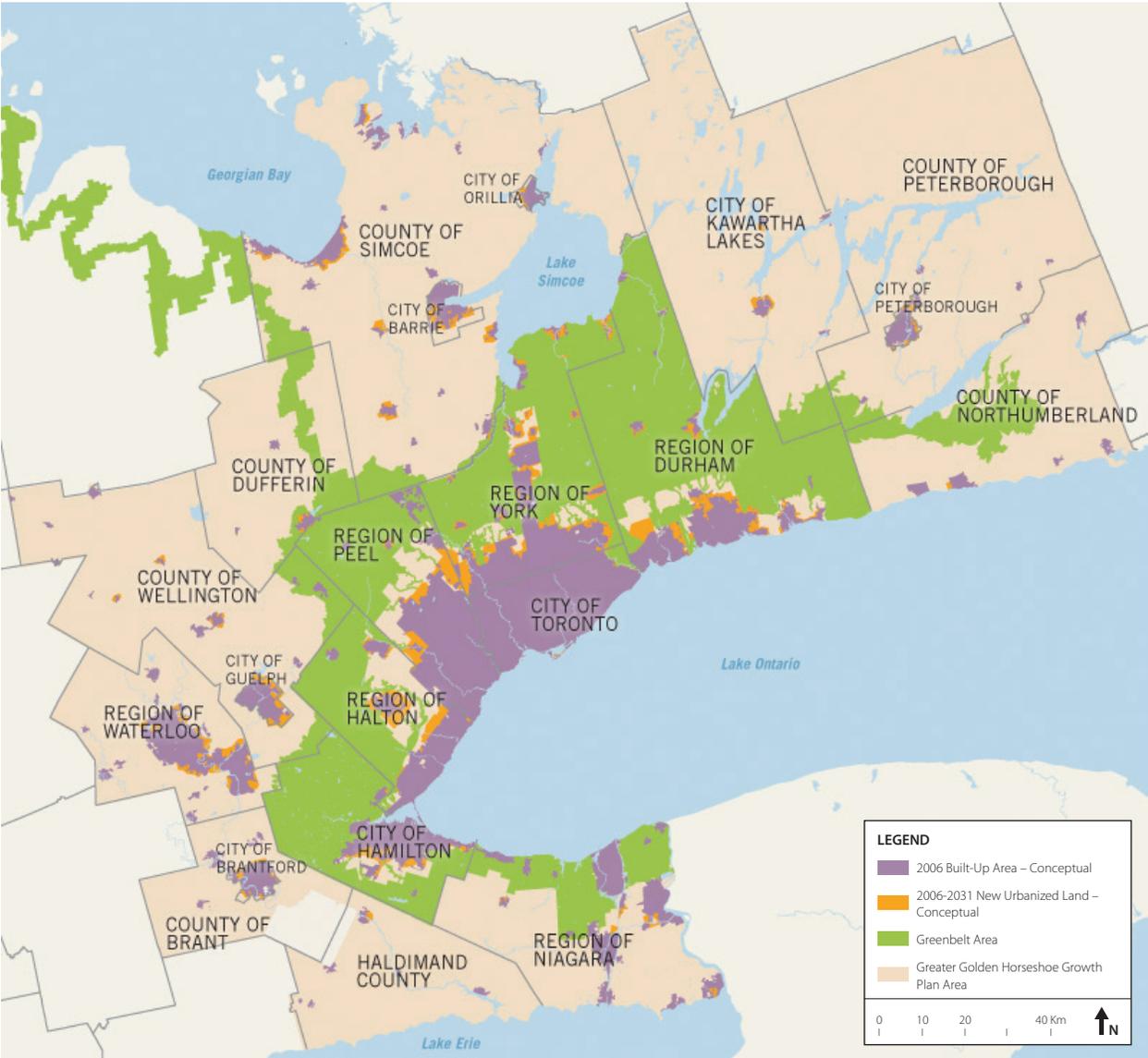
Over the last 10 years, the province of Ontario has put a smart growth framework in place. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) and the Greenbelt Plan together provide direction on how we need to grow sustainably by providing more options for housing, mixed commercial, office and residential buildings that will enable more of us to live near our work, schools and other amenities like grocery stores and community centres while protecting farmland and natural areas.² Despite a slow start and mixed implementation results, this change away from old-style sprawl is significant and as a result, there is fear and skepticism in some communities about the benefits of mixed-use buildings and intensification. At the same time, other communities are already embracing

smarter growth because of the many benefits it offers.

This report provides municipal and community leaders with reasons why we need to grow smarter. It provides descriptions of what a smarter growth future might look like and features examples (and photographs) from across the region of communities who have adopted a smarter growth approach. The report shows why it makes good economic and environmental sense to grow up, not out. It shows that our cities and communities will benefit from a diversity of housing and transportation options as well as the protection of farmland and natural areas. By keeping our rural areas rural, maintaining well defined boundaries of our cities and building up in our urban areas, the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region can be on its way to a sustainable future.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Greenbelt Plan:

A blueprint for smarter growth



NOTE: The information on this map is not to scale, does not accurately reflect approved land-use planning boundaries, and may be out of date. For more information on precise boundaries, the appropriate municipality should be consulted. For more information on the Greenbelt Area boundaries, the Greenbelt Plan 2005 should be consulted. The Province of Ontario assumes no responsibility or liability for any consequences of any use made of this map.

Map © Queen's Printer for Ontario.

The Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan provide the Greater Golden Horseshoe with a blueprint for how to grow.

By identifying where development can and cannot occur, the Greenbelt Plan (2005) ensures that Ontarians continue to have access to fresh, local food, a thriving agricultural industry, forests that clean our air and wetlands that clean our water. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006) sets out how growth will occur in the region, now and for generations to come.

Together, the plans direct new population, business and residential growth to existing urban areas and new sites within our planned urban area. In particular, they direct growth to urban areas, including urban growth centres, while limiting growth on farms and forests (for more on urban growth centres, see text box.) Planning at a provincial level allows us to plan beyond municipal boundaries to make infrastructure investments — in transit, schools, and hospitals — within existing cities and towns. Because it's more efficient to provide these services in places with higher density, this reduces costs, which benefits government, taxpayers and, as will be described below, the environment.

The plans encourage smarter growth. They discourage the urban sprawl that devours our farmland, and destroys our natural areas and creates more car-dependent subdivisions. By growing smarter, we can continue to protect the Greenbelt's nearly 2 million acres of farmland,



natural areas and sources of clean water, all located on the edge of our urban areas.

As we tackle challenges like climate change, it is important to recognize Ontario's Greenbelt as a natural carbon sink. Over the last 10 years, the Greenbelt's forests and nature areas have offset the pollution equivalent of 255 million cars.³ Preserving and strengthening the Greenbelt is better for our shared climate.

Over the last decade, regional and municipal governments have been incorporating Growth Plan policies into their Official Plans. Unfortunately, many of the Official Plans have been held up for years due to appeals from the development industry at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB.) As a result, these plans are just beginning to be implemented and over the next 10 years we will see, and benefit from, growth patterns that encourage compact efficient communities.

Urban Growth Centres

The Growth Plan recognizes and supports the existing trend towards higher densities and complete communities through intensification. Urban Growth Centres are the focus of significant population and employment growth. Within an urban growth boundary, these centres are to achieve the density targets allocated in the Growth Plan. For instance, downtown Brampton is required to achieve a gross density of 200 residents and jobs per hectare. The targets assigned to urban growth centres vary depending on the community's size.

(See map of urban growth centres, p.18)



It's time to stop building endless strip malls on prime farmland.

WHY BUILD SMARTER?

There's no doubt that the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) region will grow. Over the next 25 years, an additional 4.5 million people are expected to move to the GGH region.

As we grow, we need to grow smarter. We can't keep sprawling over our countryside, destroying farmland and forests and clogging our highways. Instead we need to facilitate denser, walkable, transit-friendly communities. The good news is that this type of growth is not only possible in the GGH, but has a whole range of benefits; from healthier municipal finances to healthier residents. And it can create the kind of communities where more of us want to live.

We need to do a better job planning how we accommodate anticipated growth. The provincial Growth Plan allocates growth to 2031, and sets intensification and density targets for it. In an effort to curb sprawl, the Growth Plan directs 40 per cent of new residential growth to already urbanized areas

(intensification), where there are existing urban services, roads, water, sewers, schools and existing or planned regional transit while 60 per cent of new growth will continue to be on greenfield (mostly farmland) sites. If we successfully implement the Growth Plan, we will have the kind of cities we want while protecting our clean water resources, nature and farmland.

As we grow, we need to grow smarter. We can't keep sprawling over our countryside, destroying farmland and forests and clogging our highways.

Smart cities and towns provide a range of housing options, mixed residential and commercial uses connected by sidewalks, bike paths, and public transit all within a defined urban growth boundary.

BENEFITS OF SMART GROWTH

BETTER FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Smart growth involves making more efficient use of our land and resources.

Some of the priciest services that communities need are those we don't see, such as underground pipes that provide water and sewers to our homes. In a low-density development it is expensive to provide these services and when we do, they generally require debt financing. This can be a burden on municipalities' finances since development charges rarely cover the full costs of providing these services. In contrast, in an existing urban area, many of these services (including roads, underground pipes, schools and parks) are already available so it's less expensive to provide them, thus freeing up more funds for municipalities to invest in other needed services like public transit and community spaces.

While the Growth Plan directs 40 per cent of residential growth to built-up areas with existing services, some municipalities like those in Waterloo Region have taken the lead by setting and meeting even higher targets. For example, recently the City of Kitchener in Waterloo Region has achieved a target of directing 54 per cent of growth to existing built-up areas (directing 46 per cent of new growth to greenfield sites.⁴)

Regional municipalities like Waterloo understand that the costs of sprawl development are too high. They want to protect their rural areas and direct growth to urban areas. They also want to provide services like light rail transit to spur investment and revitalize their downtowns. Directing growth to

existing urban areas can make that happen. It's too expensive to provide transit to low density suburbs. When cities become dense enough, transit services are more affordable.

The Growth Plan reinforces what these municipalities understand: growing more efficiently is better for municipal finances. Smarter growth can reduce the drain on municipal finances, which also means less of a burden on taxpayers.



BETTER FOR RESIDENTS: FINANCES, TRANSIT, HEALTH AND MORE

Smarter growth is better for residents. In an efficient, compact community residents aren't on the hook for subsidizing sprawl to the same extent as in a low-density town or city.⁵ That translates to less of a drain on people's pocketbooks and lower costs for the municipality.

Aside from financial costs of poorly planned growth, studies have shown living in sprawl communities can impact people's health because there is less daily opportunity for casual exercise. Living in a walkable, compact community promotes a healthier lifestyle where people walk rather than drive for daily chores like grocery shopping, going to the pharmacy or commuting to work or school. In a compact community, people are also more likely to walk to entertainment options, such as stores, movie theatres, parks and restaurants because mixed use communities provide amenities near where people live.

By growing smarter, we're also protecting farmland and natural heritage areas so Greater Golden Horseshoe residents continue to have access to fresh, local food and clean water sources. We're ensuring that nature isn't a long drive away for GGH residents. It is a great benefit to be able to go for a walk or hike in a forest or natural area, take in the quiet atmosphere and the view and see the wildlife that thrives there.

CREATING PLACES MORE OF US WANT TO LIVE

The future is in creating healthy, connected communities that are not only more compact and more prosperous, but are more desirable places to live. These days many people don't want to live in a subdivision where they need to rely on a car to get around.

In a recent survey of homeowners, RBC and Pembina found that homebuyers prefer walkable, transit-friendly communities.⁶ For the same reason, employers are choosing to relocate to urban centres, rather than corporate office parks (For more information see page 20 on employment lands.) Employees — especially younger employees — want to be able to walk or take transit to work rather than being stuck in traffic jams. But it's not just the young. As baby boomers age, some are choosing to relocate to more compact communities, where they don't need to drive daily or shovel the snow off driveways. Whether younger or older, a car-dependent lifestyle is no longer the preferred option for many.



It's clear that we don't all want or need a low density urban home. We have different housing needs at different times in our lives. So providing a variety of housing options is both necessary and desirable.

RECOMMENDATION: *Support efficient growth in urban growth centres by enforcing targets for intensification while aligning growth with existing water, road, transit and sewer capacity in towns and villages outside of the urban growth centres.*

BETTER FOR OUR SHARED CLIMATE

More efficient growth patterns have a lower carbon footprint. When millions of people live in car-dependent suburbs, many with two cars per house, vehicles clog our highways and contribute to global warming. Car-dependent development typically produces about three times the emissions of efficient, walkable, transit-friendly communities.⁷ Smarter growth is better for our climate and makes it more financially feasible to invest in rapid regional transit and bike lanes that get more people out



PHOTO: FRAM BUILDING GROUP

< PORT CREDIT: SHOPS, PARKS, RESTAURANTS AND SAILING OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR

Low Impact Development

Improving water quality is critical in a dense urban area. Low impact development reduces hard surfaces to allow natural filtration at the source before it enters our watershed. Severe weather events that occur with climate change require us to adapt to our changing environment. There are some simple ways we can improve water quality while adapting to climate change: plant natural areas or swales along the sides of buildings, use permeable paving surfaces like gravel instead of pavement, or use rainbarrels and cisterns to retain water to draw out sediment while providing irrigation for gardens.

Car-dependent development typically produces about three times the emissions of efficient, walkable, transit-friendly communities.

of their cars. Providing more options to move people across the region to homes, jobs and schools is better for our climate.

But more needs to be done to address climate change in Ontario. For example, buildings and transportation make up close to 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario.⁸ By building connected communities and more energy efficient buildings, we can reduce our emissions. In urban areas, green infrastructure (like natural vegetation buffers and low impact development) can further help us manage severe weather and adapt to climate change.

In addition, Ontario's Greenbelt plays a role in reducing our emissions by acting as a carbon



PHOTO OF HEALTH SCIENCES BUILDING, CITY OF KITCHENER

sink, absorbing carbon emissions. Putting a price on carbon will also provide an incentive to industry to lower carbon emissions.

From ice storms that destroy our power lines, deep freezes that heave our pavement, to flooding that washes away bridges and shuts down GO trains, extreme weather is hitting harder and closer to home. And it's impacting Greater Golden Horseshoe residents, businesses, and cities. It's clear that climate action is needed — and it's needed now.

Building more resilient communities will enable us to cope with climate change, protect water resources, and address our social and economic needs. Many municipalities are already working to create smart, resilient communities by:

- Moving to a lower carbon economy to reduce our overall carbon footprint through smarter growth
- Planning and enhancing our natural heritage systems, which offset emissions and act as natural carbon sinks
- Changing and adapting buildings and infrastructure to meet the challenges of a changing climate
- Implementing low impact development and storm water incentives
- Providing low-carbon alternative transportation options like bike lanes and/or light rail

Smarter growth is one piece of a suite of policies needed to address climate change in Ontario.

RECOMMENDATION: *Address climate change by putting a meaningful price on carbon that will reduce our emissions, create a fund for public transit and provide incentives for energy efficient buildings and green infrastructure.*

PRESERVING OUR FARMLAND

We can't afford to lose more of our local farmland to land-intensive urban sprawl. Of course, the Greater Golden Horseshoe region will grow, but it needs to grow in a way that doesn't pave over our best farmland.

According to the Growth Plan, by 2015 at least 40 per cent of all new residential development should be located within the existing built-up areas. A report published by the Neptis Foundation, *Implementing the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, found that many municipalities, such as York and Durham Region, were just meeting the minimum growth targets while Waterloo was exceeding the target. In 2013, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs

Based on calculations comparing the land needed for the forecasted population growth to 2031, more greenfield land has been allocated for growth than is needed.

and Housing reduced intensification targets in nine municipalities. Brant County, for example, has an intensification target of just 15 per cent. Despite having a provincial plan to curb urban sprawl, most municipalities continue to build 60 per cent or more of new development on greenfields rather than in existing urban areas.⁹ This is why the Growth Plan intensification targets need to increase.

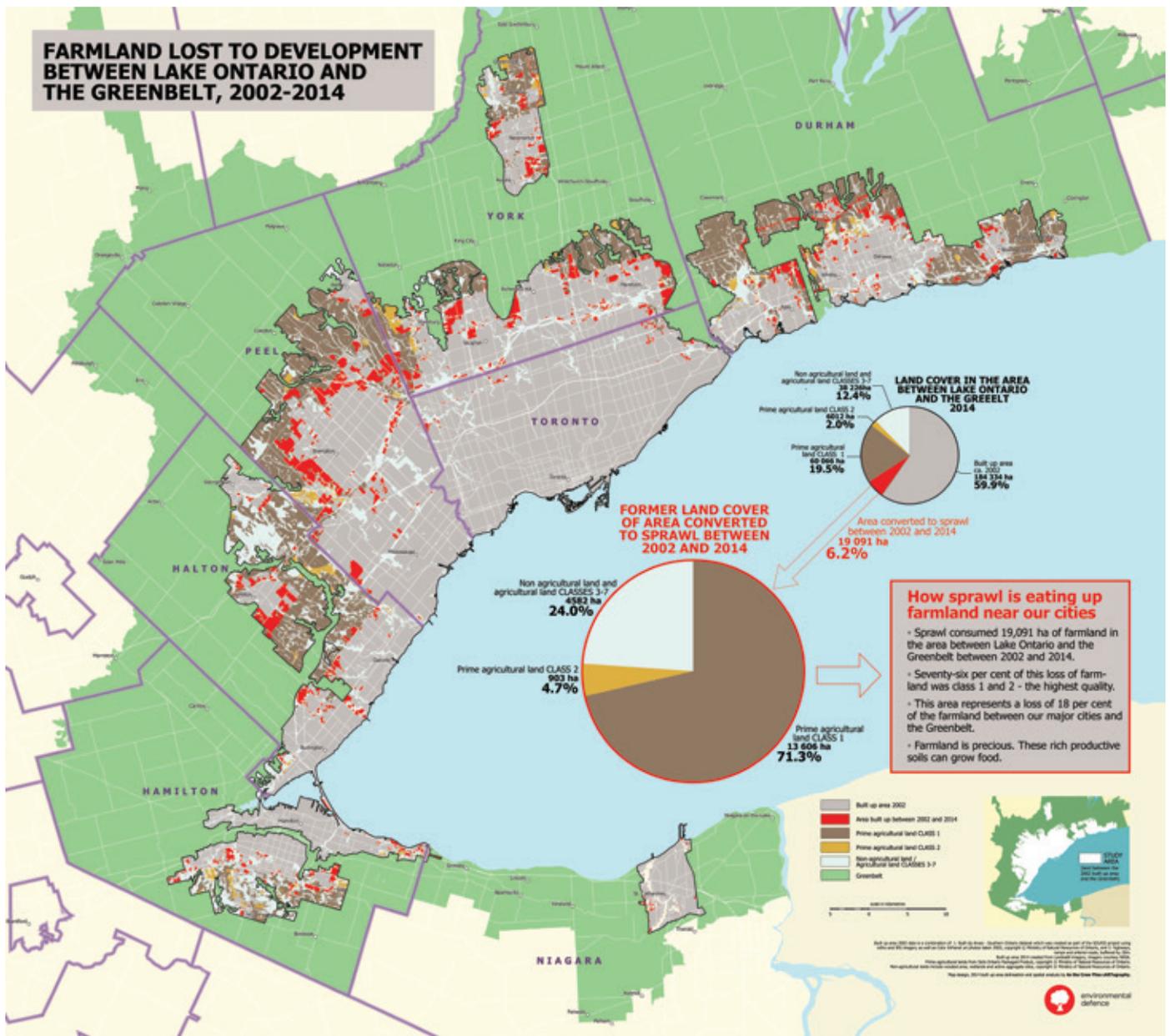
Aside from sprawl development being expensive to service, it is also unnecessary to look beyond our existing urban boundaries to locate new residential growth. According to the provincial Growth Plan's own forecasts and municipal land allocations, there is more than enough land available for development to 2031 within the planned boundaries. The Neptis report, *Understanding the Fundamentals of the Growth Plan*, identifies two factors that indicate there is an excess supply of land available for development allocated for growth. Outward expansion has slowed on greenfield land (farms) and the land designated for growth by municipalities in the outer ring exceeds the land that is needed for the projected population and job growth.¹⁰ This oversupply of land and the relaxed intensification targets indicate that there is no need to extend urban boundaries for the next 10 years or until the next Growth Plan review.

RECOMMENDATION: *Freeze the urban boundary expansion for the next 10 years. There is more than enough land set aside by municipalities to accommodate the growth forecasted population for the Greater Golden Horseshoe beyond 2031. We don't need to keep sprawling over our farmland.*

It's time to change our growth patterns. In southern Ontario, we can't keep sprawling outward and paving over farmland. In the last decade, we've lost 18,978 hectares of the best farmland (Class 1 and Class 2) between Lake Ontario and the Greenbelt (see map below.) Without the Greenbelt, we would have lost an estimated quarter million acres of fertile

farmland by 2031 to sprawl development.¹¹

Farmland is essential to our economy. In Ontario, the agri-food economy is the largest economic sector, contributing close to 740,000 jobs.¹² Ontario is the largest food and beverage processing jurisdiction in Canada and among the three largest in North America.¹³



Value of the Greenbelt

In addition to its agricultural value, Ontario's Greenbelt provides \$2.6 billion in ecological services (services like water filtration.) The Greenbelt's forested areas are not only essential as homes for species at risk of extinction, they are key to reducing climate impacts from severe weather while providing natural air and water filtration and cooling benefits.¹⁴

When we pave over agricultural land, it hurts our economy as well as our environment. Agricultural soil filters water and absorbs carbon to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Ontario's Greenbelt protects our local farmland and natural areas like forests. It's time to consider extending the Greenbelt to protect agricultural lands beyond the Greenbelt.

We don't need to choose between protecting agricultural lands or the building and construction industries. With smarter growth, both can thrive. By successfully implementing

the Growth Plan and growing the Greenbelt, we can support the building industry by redeveloping main streets and creating mid-rise neighbourhoods around transit hubs while protecting one of our largest economic assets, our agricultural lands.

RECOMMENDATION: *Expand the Greenbelt to include additional prime agricultural land and natural heritage systems and ensure complete mapping of these systems for the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe.*

TRANSIT PLANNING: WHY IT MATTERS

Moving people and goods easily and smoothly across the Greater Golden Horseshoe is key to our regional prosperity. But traffic congestion, a daily frustration for some, is costing us all financially.

The Toronto Board of Trade estimates traffic congestion costs our economy \$6 billion a year, rising to \$15 billion a year by 2031 if we don't make significant investments in commuter services.¹⁵

**One GO Train
takes 1,670 cars
off the road.¹⁶**

"The car is the cigarette of the future," says Jamie Lerner, the Brazilian politician who transformed Curitiba, Brazil into a walkable, transit-friendly city.¹⁷ If we want to foster mobility across the region, we need to stop putting the car — and roads and highways — at the front end of our city planning.

We need to build more efficient communities that encourage more of us to cycle, walk or take public transit to work. We need to invest in public transit so that more of us can get to where we want to go faster. Metrolinx, the

provincial transit agency, has a transit plan called the Big Move.¹⁸ By 2031, the Big Move's planned improvements to transit would put most people in urban growth centres within two kilometres of rapid transit. If more people took public transit, cycled or walked to work, benefits would be economic, social and environmental.

BENEFITS TO BUSINESSES

Efficient and accessible transit would mean fewer people clogging our highways. If congestion was reduced, regional economic development would improve. Businesses could get their goods to market quickly and at a lower cost than spending hours stuck in traffic.

BENEFITS TO RESIDENTS

Commuting by car has big financial costs associated with it. A 2015 TD Economics report identified that most 905-area households rely on cars for their commute and this impacts household finances.¹⁹ There are about four million cars in the GTA.²⁰ Not surprisingly, car ownership is a significant factor in household debt levels.²¹ Cars are expensive to own and operate; CAA estimates it costs between \$8,000 to \$14,000 per year to own and operate a car.²² Getting more people to use public transit may benefit the finances of many low as well as middle income families.

DUMB GROWTH

building new low-density sprawl subdivisions

VS

SMART GROWTH

creating compact walkable, transit friendly communities



40%+

of sprawl costs are passed onto taxpayers

30-50%

SAVINGS (LONG TERM)

on infrastructure like roads and water pipes

less debt for cities,
less burden for taxpayers



7.5 HOURS! LOST PER WEEK COMMUTING

(average toronto commute)



\$11,000 to run a car per year

A necessity if you are living in car dependent suburb

Traffic jams! More car dependent subdivisions means more people on the roads = clogged highways

\$6 billion lost by Greater Golden Horeshoe in productivity because of traffic



Save \$200,000

over a 25 year mortgage if you own one car, not two

better flow of goods and people throughout the region



3X more carbon emissions

produced by car dependent sprawl than compact communities

too expensive to provide frequent public transit

move more people and INVEST MONEY SAVED IN PUBLIC TRANSIT



19,000 hectares of farmland paved over

between Lake Ontario and the Greenbelt (2002-2014)



212,000 jobs

the agriculture & agri-food sector contribute to the GGH economy

\$12.3 billion

amount the region's agriculture and agri-food sector contributes to Ontario's economy



Here's how smart communities grow:

SMALL towns
Build 2-3 storey buildings downtown to revitalize our main streets.

MEDIUM urban growth centres
Build 5-6 storey midrise development to infuse energy at street level.

LARGE cities downtown
10-12 storey buildings—appropriate for larger cities.



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CASE STUDY



EXAMPLE OF WHAT COULD BE COMING TO WATERLOO

Waterloo Region: Transit as Transformative

We need to change our land use patterns from car-led development to building smart, healthy cities and towns that are more efficient and connected by transit. Some municipalities like the City of Kitchener in Waterloo Region are taking the lead.

In 2012, Waterloo Region developed a bold strategy to focus new residential development within existing urban areas, with a specific focus on the downtown core and at rapid transit stops.²³ This strategy aligns investment in transit directly with growth, ensuring that residents of new development will have access to regional and local public transit and that public transit spurs new development.

Waterloo Region has gone beyond the Growth Plan's 40 per cent target, setting a 50 per cent density target for new residential development within the existing urban area. And one city within the Region, the City of Kitchener, recently achieved a 54 per cent target by encouraging redevelopment along a light rail transit route, which connects downtown Waterloo with downtown Kitchener, Cambridge, and the GO station. This new light rail transit will be completed in 2017, but is already spurring redevelopment along the local rapid transit route with 42 new and redeveloped sites.

In the City of Kitchener, redevelopment near interconnecting transit services, or transit hubs supported better coordination of bike

paths, sidewalks and transit to support a walkable, connected community. Reusing or modifying buildings in their downtown gives residents more choices for housing, including townhomes, apartments and condos and opportunities to live and work in the same building or nearby. It also makes better use of our existing services like schools, pipes and roads while saving money on providing services, such as emergency services and waste collection. And it facilitates the clean-up of old industrial sites while protecting our resources like water, nature and farmland. Waterloo's Community Building Strategy promotes diverse mobility, encouraging people to walk, cycle or take public transit.

Beyond helping the community understand the benefits of increasing density near transit hubs, Waterloo's strategy provides information to investors and developers about economic development opportunities by clearly defining where the city wants more intensive mixed residential/office and commercial uses to locate. The strategy also directs growth and roads away from rural communities, farmland and environmentally sensitive areas, ensuring the rural areas thrive.



LRT TRANSITWAY IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

In downtown areas, a dedicated transit lane (also called a transitway) may provide a walkable area with safe routes for cycling and delivery vehicles. In some cities, like San Jose, California transitways provide access to bikes and delivery vehicles but car traffic is not allowed.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Exposure to pollutants from cars can impact people's health. Whether you live near a highway or commute on one, you're exposed to carcinogens and pollutants that can cause asthma and heart disease. The Canadian Medical Association Journal estimates that 10 million Canadians are exposed to traffic-related air pollution²⁴ — evidence that the road to better health is not paved. Putting transit first will reduce the health impacts of smog.

Aside from improving air quality, putting transit first will get more of us walking and out of our

cars, which is better for our wallets and our waistlines.²⁵ By investing in transit and building near transit hubs, we can improve mobility, spur local investment and create the kind of communities people want — transit-friendly, walkable neighbourhoods.

RECOMMENDATION: *Better align the Growth Plan with the Big Move transit plan objectives permitting higher densities within 2 km of transit hubs in urban growth centres and provide multiple ways to access transit hubs, including cycling, walking and driving.*

RE-IMAGINING OUR CITIES

Making more efficient use of our land is the key to building more compact, complete communities (For a definition of complete communities, see text box.) Imagine working closer to where you live or having a shorter, less crowded commute. It is possible if we begin to change our growth patterns and accept alternative forms of buildings, like duplexes, townhomes, apartment buildings, and live-work condos on our main streets. Making these changes will help revitalize our communities, creating more places people want to live.

Providing a wider choice of housing is vital if we are to create complete communities, where people can walk to their daily chores and entertainment. As described earlier, walkable, transit-friendly communities appeal not only to people in their 20s and 30s, but also to baby boomers because complete communities are easier to age in. Vibrant, walkable, mixed use communities are the kind of places where you



LIVE-WORK MIXED USE BUILDING IN PORT CREDIT

can walk to work, school, community centres, cafés, stores or movie theatres.

Smart growth is not just about infilling empty lots with new multi-storey buildings, but about keeping the character of the area. Urban design is essential to building attractive, functional buildings that fit within the community scale and design. Compact developments can be stylish and inviting. For an example, look at Port Credit.

Complete Communities

Complete Communities contribute to the quality and character of the place where people live, work, and play to meet the needs of all citizens despite their age. Complete communities provide access to jobs, housing options, health services, education, recreation, natural areas, shops and transportation options.

INTENSIFICATION: GROWING UP

Smarter growth doesn't mean an influx of high-rise condos. The Growth Plan designated a density target of people and jobs per hectare, which municipalities then translate into the amount of land required. And those targets vary appropriately depending on the size of a community.



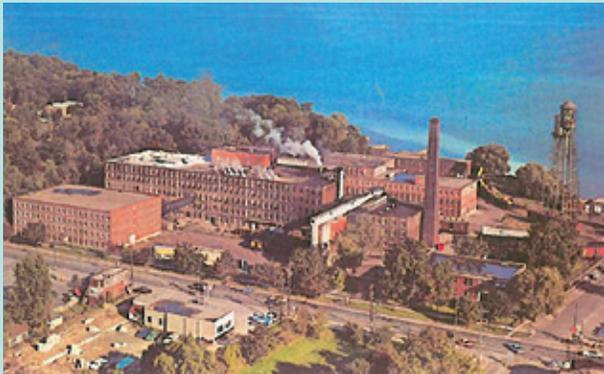
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INTENSIFICATION: SIZE-APPROPRIATE GROWTH

In smaller urban growth centres, the density target is 150 people and jobs per hectare or 60 persons per acre. This applies in the downtowns of Barrie, Brantford, Cambridge, Guelph, Peterborough, and St. Catharines. This density is consistent with the existing downtown areas in these towns, which usually have two to three storey buildings with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential or office uses above. By redeveloping under-used building sites, with infill, we can create new neighbourhoods within our existing urban areas. In some communities, there is a reluctance to implement the density targets. But if we don't make changes to how we grow, we are contributing to the problem created by inefficient wasteful development. We're also missing the opportunity to bring new life to our downtowns.

Port Credit Intensification Project

In Port Credit, an old industrial site was redeveloped to create a new neighbourhood, with commercial and residential uses providing jobs and housing.



BEFORE REDEVELOPMENT



AFTER REDEVELOPMENT

Even in larger communities, smart growth still doesn't mean an influx of 50-storey condos. The following cities are designated as urban growth centres: Brampton, Burlington, Hamilton, Kitchener, Uptown Waterloo, Markham, Downtown Milton, Mississauga City Centre, Newmarket Centre, Midtown Oakville, Downtown Oshawa, Downtown Pickering, Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway, Vaughan Corporate Centre.

For urban growth centres, the density target is 200 people and jobs per hectare or 80 per acre. Depending on the layout of the building, this target is consistent with 5-6 storey mid-rise developments — the kind of developments that are friendly to pedestrians, still allow for plenty of sunlight and can infuse a block with energy when a mix of stores and restaurants are at street level.



FLICKR USER: BRICOLEURBANISM, HT: P&S/WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/BRICOLEURBANISM/721254418



AN EXAMPLE OF ADAPTIVE RE-USE: LANG TANNERY AT NIGHT, CITY OF KITCHENER, LOCATED ALONG THE FUTURE LRT LINE

In larger cities, the Growth Plan does provide direction for higher density. But that's in places where the scale is appropriate. In city centres — downtown Toronto, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough — the target is 400 people and jobs per hectare or 161 per acre. Depending on layout of the building, this target is consistent with a 10 to 12 storey building, which isn't out of place in a city centre.

INTENSIFICATION: PEOPLE-CENTRED PLANNING

Building up doesn't mean we forget to focus on people. As we grow up, we need to continue to create neighbourhood places and ensure we have the infrastructure in place for cyclists, walkers, transit users and car drivers.

The layout of streets is also an important factor in creating efficient communities. A grid-like street pattern makes the most efficient use of space so it's best for transit, walking and cycling. Short straight blocks make it easier to provide transit stops and allow us to see further, so they are safer too.

A variety of shops and services such as restaurants, public spaces and trees are essential to attract residents and provide

employment. It really is about how we create healthy, liveable communities as we grow.

RECOMMENDATION: *Foster healthy communities by requiring active transportation plans in urban growth centres.*

RE-IMAGINING OUR CITIES: EMPLOYMENT AREAS

Increasingly, people are working from home or their mobile devices, which means they don't have a desk in a static office location. As the nature of work is changing, so are employment land uses in our cities. As manufacturing jobs moved out of our cities, many new creative jobs, from advertising to technology start-ups, moved into downtown warehouses along transit routes. This revival of our cities has attracted many young people who aren't interested in a long commute.

Today's employees want a good quality of life. And that means not spending hours stuck in gridlock. To attract employers and employees, towns and cities need to provide access to transit and active transportation alternatives, in addition to amenities like restaurants,



walking trails and fitness centres. Re-purposing warehouses in downtown areas often provides a business environment that attracts high-end employment uses. Not only are these spaces more accessible to their employees, there is usually a mix of housing choices nearby. This is why programs that renew and revitalize downtowns are so popular.

The land may be cheaper but low-rise warehousing and business parks located on the edge of the suburbs are not an efficient use of land or transportation resources. Three to four storey buildings are more adaptable for use as live/work space and have a smaller footprint. Plus, they're more attractive to employees since they're often closer to where people live.

As we make changes to our growth patterns, it is important to measure if these changes are making a difference. To determine progress in implementation, the Province published a report, *Towards Performance Indicators for the Growth Plan*, which identifies that new office space is a good indicator of economic health, and that places like Toronto, Hamilton and Waterloo are benefiting from downtown revitalization.²⁶

Locating major office spaces and mid-rise residential alongside transit stations can add to

To attract employers and employees, towns and cities need to provide access to transit and active transportation alternatives, in addition to amenities like restaurants, walking trails and fitness centres.

the vitality of the community while supporting a low carbon economy. Our prosperity depends on the mobility of our workers and our products. As mentioned earlier, we lose \$6 billion a year in productivity due to gridlock. If more people took transit to work, fewer cars would block the movement of goods. The reduced gridlock would improve our economy.

RECOMMENDATION: *Improve the flow of people and goods across the region by prioritizing investment in transit, rail, and existing highways over new highways so that the transportation network will better serve and reinforce smart growth rather than sprawl.*



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan work together by curbing urban sprawl and directing growth to existing urban areas.

Using these plans as a blueprint, we can move towards creating compact, walkable, transit-friendly communities — places where more of us actually want to live. The successful implementation of these plans is key to building smart compact cities. While the plans were introduced several years ago, over the next 10 to 20 years we will see municipalities

implementing Official Plans that conform to the Growth Plan.

Smarter, more efficient growth planning directs new growth to where there is capacity in the existing roads, transit, and water infrastructure. Good planning practices dictate that we ensure we have capacity as we plan for growth. As a result, there is an increasing call for stronger links in the Growth Plan between growth and transit services. We need to plan our growth around our existing transit services, and invest in making those transit services quicker rather than providing transportation services in low-density areas. We need to stop putting the car — and new roads and highways — at the front end of our city building.

We need to plan our growth around our existing transit services, and invest in making those transit services quicker rather than planning transportation services in low-density areas.

To truly create vibrant communities, we need to have employment and a variety of housing options (like townhomes and rental units) accessible by transit, walking and cycling. This will reduce traffic congestion, benefit residents' health, as well as reduce carbon emissions, benefiting our shared climate.

If we make better use of our urban areas and build more efficient communities, we can continue to grow but in a way that curbs urban sprawl to protect our agricultural areas, nature and clean water resources. We all benefit

financially when we make better use of our costly infrastructure. It's better for municipalities and for residents.

It's time for cities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to grow up, not out. By supporting smarter (more intensive) growth, we can create the healthy communities we want, that attract the businesses we need and create neighbourhoods and communities instead of just building identical single family houses on farmland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It's been 10 years since the award-winning provincial plans were enacted and we've had an opportunity over that time to consider how they can be improved to support smart growth. We recommend the following actions to strengthen the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan:

- 1 Support efficient growth in urban growth centres by enforcing targets for intensification while aligning growth with existing water, transit, road and sewer capacity in towns and villages outside of the urban growth centres.
- 2 Address climate change by putting a meaningful price on carbon that will reduce our emissions, create a fund for public transit and provide incentives for energy efficient buildings and green infrastructure.
- 3 Freeze the urban boundary expansion for the next 10 years. There is more than enough land set aside by municipalities to accommodate the growth forecasted population for the Greater Golden Horseshoe beyond 2031. We don't need to keep sprawling over our farmland.
- 4 Expand the Greenbelt to include additional prime agricultural land and natural heritage systems and ensure complete mapping of these systems for the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- 5 Better align the Growth Plan with the Big Move transit plan objectives permitting higher densities within 2 km of transit hubs in urban growth centres and provide multiple ways to access transit hubs, including cycling, walking and driving.
- 6 Foster healthy communities by requiring active transportation plans in urban growth centres.
- 7 Improve the flow of people and goods across the region by prioritizing investment in transit, rail, and existing highways over new highways so that the transportation network will better serve and reinforce smart growth rather than sprawl.

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