



Hamilton

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July 29, 2020

Sandra Bickford
Ontario Growth Secretariat
777 Bay Street, Suite 2304
Toronto, ON M7A 2J8

Dear Madam,

Re: Comments from the City of Hamilton – Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology for A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe – ERO Posting #019-1679

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on “Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology for A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe – ERO Posting #019-1679”. City of Hamilton staff have reviewed the ERO posting which explains the revised methodology and have prepared the comments below and provide comments with respect to the following areas of concern:

1. Lack of a standardized methodology document and lack of detail in the ERO posting;
2. Market-based approach; and,
3. Public consultation.

The following specific areas of concern are identified by the City of Hamilton:

1. Lack of a standardized methodology document and lack of detail in the ERO posting:
In 2018, the Province released the Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The standardized methodology was described in a stand-alone document that clearly identified the approach to the completion of a Land Needs Assessment which all Growth Plan municipalities were required to use in the completion of their MCR work. While there was some flexibility in the various data inputs and assumptions used in applying the method, there could be no deviation in the mandated steps to be taken. There was no opportunity to incorporate higher forecasts into the LNA than those shown in the Schedule 3 forecasts in 2018. The benefit of a standardized methodology is that it allows for a consistent approach amongst all Growth Plan municipalities, allows for easy comparison amongst municipalities, and avoids the need for debate, particularly at the LPAT, on the appropriate approach to land needs assessment.

The ERO Posting is proposing to replace the 2018 Methodology with an ‘outcome-based methodology’ that appears to provide greater flexibility in how the LNA must be completed. The new methodology is described on the ERO posting, but is much less detailed than the previous methodology. The posting notes the new

methodology will present “a simplified approach to land needs assessment that reduces the overall complexity of implementation of the Plan. The proposed Methodology will provide more flexibility to municipalities.”

Under the revised approach, there is no longer a stand-alone methodology document with specific steps to be followed, but rather a much less formal identification of the minimum requirements to be considered. There would appear to be much greater latitude in the data inputs and assumptions used under the new approach. Municipalities may also consider alternate assumptions about forecast growth to the Growth Plan horizon.

While there may be benefit to allowing some flexibility to municipalities in the completion of the LNA (e.g. municipalities can complete the LNA in a manner that is most transparent and easy to understand for Council and the public), there is a significant concern the lack of detail in the proposed methodology on the ERO posting will lead to debate and questioning over the methodology used to complete the LNA and possible appeals to the LPAT, thereby defeating the purpose of establishing a methodology document and slowing the City’s growth management and conformity exercise.

Recommendation: The Land Needs Assessment methodology must provide a detailed, standardized approach to the completion of the LNA and remove any opportunities for doubt or debate regarding the approach to LNA completion. The revised methodology should be presented in a detailed stand-alone document as per the 2018 version, and not simply a vague description on the ERO posting.

2. Market-based approach: The proposed methodology also appears to follow more of a market-based approach to the consideration of housing need, as noted in the following passage from the ERO posting:

“Recognizing that local needs are diverse, the proposed new Methodology aims to provide the key factors to be considered as municipalities plan to ensure that a sufficient and appropriate mix of land is available to: accommodate all housing market segments; avoid housing shortages; consider market demand; accommodate all employment types, including those that are evolving; and plan for all infrastructure services that are needed to meet complete communities objectives to the horizon of the Plan.”

Further, the posting states that the methodology will “be forward-looking and account for demographics, employment trends, market demand, and concerns related to housing affordability in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.” The proposed new method focusses much more on the notion of ‘market-based’ demand and ensuring sufficient land supply is available to serve all segments of the housing market, referring to ground-related housing versus apartments as distinguished in the updated technical forecast report (2020).

Staff note that basing the LNA in part on market demand raises the question of how market demand is defined, and whether or not future growth management planning should be based on past market demand, or more of a forward-looking approach.

Recommendation: if the revised methodology is based, in large part, on the satisfaction of market demand, greater detail as to how market demand is to be defined needs to be provided to remove opportunities for lengthy tribunal debates over this topic. Further, municipalities are required to plan for the minimum intensification and density targets in the Growth Plan, and therefore direction on how municipalities can reconcile market demand with the required targets should be provided.

3. Public consultation:

Staff note there is also new language in the ERO posting regarding public consultation and different levels of government, as part of the LNA process. It is staff's understanding that the 2018 method envisioned consultation on the LNA document with Provincial staff only, as it is a primarily technical document. It was understood that public consultation would occur on the various inputs into the LNA (e.g. intensification and density targets, employment land review) prior to the completion of the LNA. This approach is a potentially significant change to the LNA process and eventual results. The combination of a less formal approach and opportunity to incorporate alternative (higher) assumptions about future growth will require an expanded and lengthy consultation process than envisioned under the 2018 method. It will be challenging for municipalities it meet the required July, 2022 conformity deadline.

Recommendation: as the completion of a Land Needs Assessment is a technical document, and it is understood that municipalities will have already consulted on LNA inputs such as intensification and density targets, the completion and approval of the LNA should not require additional public consultation, potentially resulting in lengthy debates and delays.

Please accept these comments to meet the July 31, 2020 Provincial deadline for the submission of comments on the Proposed Land Needs Assessment Methodology for A Place to Grow. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Heather Travis at (905) 546-2424, ext. 4168, or by email at Heather.Travis@hamilton.ca.

Yours truly,

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