



CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Planning Division

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	May 31, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Comments from the City of Hamilton – Proposed Amendments to the Greenbelt Plan: Growing the Size of the Greenbelt – ERO Postings #019-4485, 019-4483, and 019-4803 (PED21064(a)) (Wards 1, 5, 12, 13)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	Wards 1, 5, 12, 13
PREPARED BY:	Heather Travis (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4168
SUBMITTED BY:	Steve Robichaud Director, Planning and Chief Planner Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the City of Hamilton supports the inclusion of Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek in the Greenbelt Plan as Urban River Valleys as part of the Provincial “Growing the Greenbelt” initiative, as identified on Appendix “A” attached to Report PED21064(a);
- (b) That, in addition to Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek, the City of Hamilton recommends the inclusion of Coldwater (Ancaster) Creek, as identified on Appendix “B” attached to Report PED21064(a), to the Greenbelt Plan as an Urban River Valley;
- (c) That Report PED21064(a) be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) to be considered as part of the City of Hamilton’s comments on Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Postings #019-4485, 019-4483, and 019-4803 respecting Growing the Size of the Greenbelt and Urban River Valleys.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Postings #019-4485, 019-4483 and 019-4803, the Province is requesting comments on proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Plan to add additional Urban River Valleys (URVs) to the Plan. URVs connect the Greenbelt to the Great Lakes and inland lakes through urban areas that are not part of the Greenbelt Plan. Within the City of Hamilton, the effect of the proposals is to add Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek to the Greenbelt Plan as URVs. The Province is also seeking input on additional recommendations for URVs to be added to the Plan.

City staff support the inclusion of Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek to the Greenbelt Plan as URVs. While it is noted that these areas already enjoy significant protection through existing policies and regulations, protection of river valleys is vitally important to address the impacts of a changing climate by providing stormwater management and flood protection to protect citizens, agricultural land and infrastructure, and the natural environment. There is significant public ownership of lands along both Stoney and Battlefield Creeks which will be further protected through the URV designation.

In addition, staff reiterate previous recommendations to the Province to add Coldwater Creek (also known as Ancaster Creek) to the Greenbelt Plan as a URV. This recommendation was first put forward as part of the Co-ordinated Provincial Plan Review in 2015 and followed up in 2021 as part of the Growing the Greenbelt Phase One consultation.

Staff provided comments to the Province on the ERO Postings on April 21, 2022 (Appendix “C” attached to Report PED21064(a)), in advance of the April 23, 2022 commenting deadline. This Report and any revisions by Council will be forwarded to the Province as additional comments on the proposed amendments.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 7

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: N/A

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

ERO Postings 019-4485, 019-4483 and 019-4803

On March 24, 2022, the following three postings were added to the ERO for public comment:

- ERO Posting #019-4485: Proposed Amendment to the Greenbelt Plan - Growing the Size of the Greenbelt;
- ERO Posting #019-4483: Proposed Amendment to the Greenbelt Area Boundary Regulation - Growing the Size of the Greenbelt; and,
- ERO Posting #019-4803: Ideas for Adding More Urban River Valleys.

The purpose of the proposed amendments through Postings #019-4485 and 019-4483 is to add a number of Urban River Valleys (URVs) to the Greenbelt Plan. URVs connect the Greenbelt to the Great Lakes and inland lakes through urban areas that are not part of the Greenbelt Plan. Within the City of Hamilton, the effect of the proposals is to add Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek to the Greenbelt Plan as URVs (see Appendix “A” to Report PED21064(a)). Fifty Creek has already been added to the Greenbelt Plan as a URV through the Co-ordinated Provincial Plan Review. Further information on the proposed Amendments is provided in the Analysis and Rationale for Recommendation section of this Report.

The purpose of Posting #019-4803 is to seek ideas for additional URVs or expansions of existing URVs to be added to the Greenbelt Plan in the future.

The ERO Postings were open and available for comment for 30 days, closing on April 23, 2022. City staff provided comments on the postings to the Province on April 21, 2022, in advance of the commenting deadline (attached as Appendix “C” to Report PED21064(a)). A copy of this staff report, including any amendments from Council, will be forwarded to the Province as additional City of Hamilton comments on the proposal.

Previous City of Hamilton comments on Growing the Greenbelt

The City of Hamilton has previously provided comments on the URV designation in 2015 through the Co-ordinated Provincial Plan Review (Report PED15078(b)), and in 2021 through Phase One of the Growing the Greenbelt Consultation, ERO Posting 019-3136 (Report PED21064(a)), as summarized below:

- Based on extensive review in 2015 as part of the City's Greenbelt Plan Boundary Review, which included a focus on the URVs, staff recommend that no additional URVs be added to the Greenbelt Plan (other than to reiterate two previous Council requests to add Coldwater (Ancaster) Creek, further discussed in the Analysis and Rationale for Recommendation Section of this Report). It was noted that the URVs have an extensive amount of existing natural heritage system protection based on a combination of public ownership, inclusion within the Niagara Escarpment Plan, being regulated by the Conservation Authorities, designated Open Space in the Urban Hamilton Official Plan (UHOP) and zoned as Open space. Based on the policy framework in place in 2015, it was determined that an additional layer of planning policy would not enhance the existing protection. This recommendation was submitted to the Province as part of the City's submission on the Co-ordinated Provincial Plan Review.

With the release of the Greenbelt Plan 2017, Coldwater Creek was not added as a URV. Within Hamilton, Fifty Creek was added as a URV.

- In 2021, the Province requested comments on the addition of URVs to the Greenbelt Plan through the Growing the Greenbelt consultation (ERO #019-3136). City comments provided to the Province in April 2021 reiterated the recommendation to add Coldwater Creek to the Plan as a URV. No other URVs were recommended for addition at that time.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Section 6 of the Greenbelt Plan. 2017 describes urban river valleys:

"Key river valleys in urban areas adjacent to the Greenbelt provide opportunities for additional connections to help expand and integrate the Greenbelt and its systems into the broader southern Ontario landscape. The Urban River Valley designation provides direction to those areas where the Greenbelt occupies river valleys in an urban context. These urban river valleys may be the setting for a network of uses and facilities, including recreational, cultural and tourist amenities and *infrastructure*, which are needed to support urban areas.

6.1 Description

The Urban River Valley designation as shown on Schedule 1 applies to lands within the main corridors of river valleys connecting the rest of the Greenbelt to the Great Lakes and inland lakes. The lands in this designation comprise river valleys and associated lands and are generally characterized by being:

SUBJECT: Comments from the City of Hamilton – Proposed Amendments to the Greenbelt Plan: Growing the Size of the Greenbelt – ERO Postings #019-4485, 019-4483, and 019-4803 (PED21064(a)) (Wards 1, 5, 12, 13) - Page 5 of 7

- Lands containing natural and hydrologic features, including coastal *wetlands*; and,
- Lands designated in official plans for uses such as parks, open space, recreation, conservation and environmental protection.

6.2 Policies

For lands falling within the Urban River Valley, the following policies shall apply:

1. Only publicly owned lands are subject to the policies of the Urban River Valley designation. Any privately owned lands within the boundary of the Urban River Valley area are not subject to the policies of this designation. For the purposes of this section, publicly owned lands means lands in the ownership of the Province, a municipality or a local board, including a conservation authority;
2. The lands are governed by the applicable official plan policies provided they have regard to the objectives of the Greenbelt Plan;
3. All existing, expanded or new *infrastructure* which is subject to and approved under the *Environmental Assessment Act*, or which receives a similar approval, is permitted provided it supports the needs of adjacent *settlement areas* or serves the significant growth and economic development expected in southern Ontario and supports the goals and objectives of the Greenbelt Plan; and,
4. The Protected Countryside policies do not apply except for:
 - a. The policies of section 3.2.6 (External Connections); and,
 - b. The policies of section 3.3 (Parkland, Open Space and Trails)."

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff from the Air Quality and Climate Change (AQ&CC) Program within the Healthy and Safe Communities Department provided comments on the ERO Postings which are reflected within this Report.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

1. Comments on Proposed ERO Postings #019-4485 and 019-4483: Proposed Amendment to the Greenbelt Plan - Growing the Size of the Greenbelt

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to add a number of URVs to the Greenbelt Plan. URVs connect the Greenbelt to the Great Lakes and inland lakes

through urban areas that are not part of the Greenbelt Plan. Within the City of Hamilton, the effect of the proposals is to add Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek to the Greenbelt Plan as URVs (Appendix “A” attached to Report PED21046(a)).

As noted in the Policy and Legislated Requirements Section above, the policies of the Greenbelt Plan specify that only publicly owned lands are subject to the policies of the URV designation. Publicly owned lands means lands in the ownership of the Province, a municipality or a local board, including a conservation authority. Further, the policies state that the lands are governed by the applicable Official Plan policies provided they have regard to the objectives of the Greenbelt Plan.

Staff note that both Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek have extensive areas of public ownership and provide connection to the Escarpment, which then provides connection to the Greenbelt. The boundaries of the URVs are generally based on a 60 m setback from the water’s edge, providing for protection of the natural environment surrounding the urban rivers, including the urban forest.

While staff reiterate previous comments that the proposed URV lands are already protected by a combination of Official Plan policy zoning and Conservation Authority regulations, the addition of new URVs to the Greenbelt Plan does align with Hamilton’s High Impact Climate Change Goals (as identified in the Corporate Goals and Areas of Focus for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation) by protecting and enhancing the natural environment, which can play a key role in reduction and protection from climate change impacts. [ICLEI Canada’s Climate Science Report for the City of Hamilton](#) states “On a seasonal basis, in Hamilton, spring, winter and autumn precipitation accumulations are projected to increase by the end of the century with spring and winter experiencing the greatest increases.” Protection of river valleys is vitally important to address the impacts of a changing climate by providing stormwater management and flood protection to protect citizens, agricultural land and infrastructure, and the natural environment. Staff therefore support the inclusion of Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek as URVs in the Greenbelt Plan. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of natural areas from a quality of life and city-building perspective.

2. Comments on Proposed ERO Posting #019-4803: Ideas for Adding More Urban River Valleys

As noted above, the City previously provided a recommendation to add Coldwater Creek (also known as Ancaster Creek) to the Greenbelt Plan as a URV (Appendix “B” attached to Report PED21064(a)). This recommendation was first put forward

SUBJECT: Comments from the City of Hamilton – Proposed Amendments to the Greenbelt Plan: Growing the Size of the Greenbelt – ERO Postings #019-4485, 019-4483, and 019-4803 (PED21064(a)) (Wards 1, 5, 12, 13) - Page 7 of 7

as part of the City's comments on the Co-ordinated Review in 2015 through a Council motion and followed up in 2021 as part of the Growing the Greenbelt Phase One consultation. Through ERO Posting 019-4803, staff reiterate the recommendation to add Coldwater Creek to the Greenbelt Plan as a URV.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Council could choose to provide additional or revised comments to the Province on ERO Postings 019-4485, 019-4483 and / or 019-4803. Any additional or revised comments will be forwarded to the Province as City of Hamilton comments on the proposed Amendments.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report PED21064(a) – Proposed Greenbelt Plan Urban River Valley Map 9 identifying Stoney Creek and Battlefield Creek

Appendix "B" to Report PED21064(a) – Map of Ancaster Creek Subwatershed

Appendix "C" to Report PED21064(a) – Letter to Province with Staff comments on ERO Postings 019-4485, 019-4486 and 019-4803, dated April 21, 2022

HT:sd