




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	October 14, 2022
SUBJECT:	New Report on Land Needs to Accommodate Growth to 2031 (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Jason Thorne General Manager Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

Today, the City of Hamilton released a new report by the consulting firm Watson & Associates Economists Ltd, that was prepared for the City in advance of an expected Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) hearing regarding the 2009 and 2011 landowner appeals to the City's Urban Hamilton and Rural Hamilton Official Plans. The report entitled "City of Hamilton Revised Urban Land Needs Assessment (L.N.A.), 2031" (the "Watson Report") provides analysis on land needs to accommodate growth to 2031, based on the provisions of the former 2006 provincial Growth Plan.

The Watson Report can be accessed on the Land Needs Assessment page on the City's website at <https://www.hamilton.ca/build-invest-grow/planning-development/grids/land-needs-assessment>

2009 and 2011 Appeals to the Hamilton Official Plans

The Rural Hamilton Official Plan (RHOP) and the Urban Hamilton Official Plan (UHOP) were adopted in 2006 and 2009, respectively. The plans implemented the preferred growth option to the year 2031 of the City's original Growth Related Integrated Development Strategy (GRIDS), which was approved by Council in 2006. GRIDS (2006) identified the need for a future urban boundary expansion for residential growth post 2016, and policies identifying the area for future growth (Elfrida) were included in the official plans but were removed by the Province through its approvals of the plans.

The removal of the policies indicating the future expansion area for residential growth was appealed by several area landowners in 2009 (for the RHOP) and 2011 (for the

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

UHOP). These appeals remain active, and a hearing before the OLT is anticipated to begin in 2023.

The Watson Report was prepared as part of the City's response to the landowner appeals and is based on the provincial policy framework that was in place at the time of the original GRIDS study.

The Watson Report

The Watson Report was prepared by the consulting firm Watson & Associates, Economists Ltd. The firm has a specialty in land economics including expertise in land planning, demographic forecasting, growth management and urban land needs assessment. The analysis seeks to confirm the City's required land needs to 2031, based on the application of the former 2006 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The Watson Report is an updated Land Needs Assessment (LNA) for growth to 2031 and was prepared in accordance with the Province's 2006 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe which was in effect at the time of the adoption of the Urban and Rural Official Plans. The analysis is also undertaken in accordance with the density targets currently in effect in the City's Official Plans and uses the most up-to-date 2021 Census information.

GRIDS (2006) defined the City's strategy for accommodating population and job growth up to the year 2031. It identified the need for an additional 80,000 new dwelling units to achieve the projected 2031 population of 660,000. A significant factor in the housing forecast in GRIDS (2006) was the assumption that household sizes would continue to decrease as had been seen in Census reporting prior to 2006 and included in provincial growth forecasts.

The Watson Report reviewed the population and housing growth in Hamilton as reported in the 2021 Census and notes that while population is tracking fairly close to the population projections contained in the 2006 Growth Plan, the household growth is noticeably lower, showing 223,000 households in 2021 (16,000 units lower than the provincial projection for 2021). This lower household (unit) growth is attributed to higher average household sizes (persons per unit) than what was projected in the original 2006 land needs assessment for GRIDS (2006). These larger household sizes result in less housing required to achieve the same population by 2031.

The Watson Report concludes that, based on the former 2006 Growth Plan, the City would require approximately 255,000 total households to achieve the 2006 Growth Plan projections compared to 269,000 that was originally identified (14,000 less). In allocating these households, or units, across the City, this analysis used the in-effect

SUBJECT: New Report on Land Needs to Accommodate Growth to 2031 (City Wide) - Page 3 of 3

Official Plan target of 40% of growth through intensification, and greenfield area density target of 70 people and jobs per hectare (PJH) for residential greenfield development. The analysis identifies that the 2021 greenfield residential density is 63 PJH so allocation of housing units to greenfield areas going forward requires a planned density of 78 PJH to offset the lower current density.

Applying the higher density to future development on vacant residential greenfield lands, the Watson Report estimates that 687 of the City's current 1,016 gross ha of vacant greenfield lands would be required to accommodate the City's population and housing forecast to 2031, leaving a surplus of 329 gross ha.

GRIDS2 (2022) and the Land Needs Assessment to 2051

The Watson Report is not part of the recent GRIDS2 planning exercise which seeks to plan for the City's growth to 2051, and which is based on the 2019 Growth Plan. That exercise concluded with the Council decision to accommodate future growth to 2051 within the City's current urban boundary.

Council approved Official Plan Amendments (OPA) to the Urban Hamilton Official Plan (OPA 167) and Rural Hamilton Official Plan (OPA 34) to implement the "no urban boundary expansion" growth scenario on June 8, 2022. The OPAs were submitted to the Province for approval on June 10, 2022. The City has not yet received a response from the Province with respect to the OPAs.

It is important to note that the Watson Report released today as part of the pending OLT hearing is based on the former 2006 Growth Plan, whereas the recent GRIDS2 exercise was based on the current 2019 Growth Plan. Given that the 2019 provincial Growth Plan differs from the 2006 Growth Plan, the Watson Report notes that "this 2022 L.N.A. update is not compliant with the Growth Plan, 2019".

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A