



CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Planning Division

TO:	Chair and Members Planning Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 31, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Provincial Amendments to the Greenbelt Plan – Public Engagement 2023 Summary Report (PED23046(d)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Charlie Toman (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5863 Jennifer Allen (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4672
SUBMITTED BY: SIGNATURE:	Anita Fabac Acting Director, Planning and Chief Planner Planning and Economic Development Department

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Greenbelt Plan Public Engagement 2023 Summary Report, attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED23046(d) be **RECEIVED**;
- (b) That the Director of Planning and Chief Planner be authorized and directed to submit the Greenbelt Plan Public Engagement 2023 Summary Report, attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED23046(d), to the Government of Ontario to be considered as part of the public consultation on Bill 136, *Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023* and future Greenbelt Plan reviews.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Planning Committee with a summary of the input received from the public engagement that occurred during August and September 2023 respecting the lands removed by the Province from the Greenbelt Plan, which is summarized in the final Greenbelt Plan Public Engagement 2023 Summary Report (attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED23046(d)).

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In December 2022, the Government of Ontario made amendments to the Greenbelt Plan which included the removal of three areas within the City of Hamilton totalling 795 hectares of land shown in Appendix “B” attached to Report PED23046(d). The Government of Ontario had stated the lands they removed from the Greenbelt Plan were intended for residential use to support the goal of building 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. City Council passed a motion in February 2023 opposing the removal.

The Government of Ontario had directed the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator to engage with the City of Hamilton and advised that the City would have an opportunity to provide input on how these lands are developed and to negotiate certain “Community Benefits” above and beyond the standard *Planning Act* requirements.

On July 17, 2023 City Council directed staff to provide input, under protest, and that a special meeting of Planning Committee be scheduled to receive public input respecting these lands, to be provided to the Province, which was held on September 14, 2023. The City also held an Open House on September 6, 2023 and provided an online survey for public input.

At the September 14, 2023 special meeting of Planning Committee staff were directed to prepare a final report on the results of the public engagement on Community Benefits based on the Interim Report provided in Report PED23046(c) and public input received at the September 14, 2023 special meeting of Planning Committee.

The City’s consultation respecting these lands received significant public interest and input with over 1,000 residents attending the City’s Open House and special meeting of Planning Committee together with hundreds of written submissions and survey responses. In total, there were 1,600+ total participants and 26,600+ outreach participants. As discussed in the consultation section of this Report and in the final Greenbelt Plan Public Engagement 2023 Summary Report (see Appendix “A” attached to Report PED23046(d)), the majority of residents who provided input opposed the Provincial decision to remove lands from the Greenbelt.

On September 21, 2023 the Ontario Premier announced that all lands removed from the Greenbelt Plan in December 2022 would be reinstated. On October 16, 2023 the Government of Ontario introduced Bill 136, *Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act, 2023* on its Environment Registry of Ontario website which if passed would return these lands to the Greenbelt Area. Staff will submit a separate report to Planning Committee with its recommended comments to the Province on this legislation.

To recognize and value the immense public response received respecting these lands, staff recommend that the Greenbelt Plan Public Engagement 2023 Summary Report be sent to the Province to be considered as part of future Greenbelt Plan reviews.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: N/A

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Government of Ontario Decision to Remove Greenbelt Lands

On November 4, 2022, the Province requested comments on proposed changes to the Greenbelt Plan. The proposals included the removal of 7,400 acres (2,995 ha) of land from the Greenbelt Plan Area in Ontario to be used to build housing in the near term. On December 16, 2022, the Province removed approximately 795 hectares of land from the Greenbelt Plan, as per the November 4, 2022 Environmental Registry of Ontario proposal.

Within the City of Hamilton, the following lands were removed from the Greenbelt Plan Area, as shown on Appendix “B” attached to Report PED23046(d):

- Lands located south of Garner Road West, west of Fiddlers Green Road, east of Shaver Road in the vicinity of Book Road (“Book Road Lands”) (727 ha in size);
- Lands located south of White Church Road East, west of Miles Road, north of Chippewa Road East, east of Upper James Street (“Whitechurch Lands”) (64 ha in size); and,
- Lands located at 331 and 339 Fifty Road, at the north-west corner of Barton Street and Fifty Road (“Fifty Road Lands”) (4 ha in size).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

In accordance with Council’s direction to receive public input as to the City’s priorities and expectations with respect to any private development proposals within the lands

removed by the Province from the Greenbelt Plan Area, public and stakeholder engagement occurred through:

- An open house which was held on September 6, 2023 at the Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre for the public to have an additional opportunity to be informed of the Provincial decisions that led to the removal of the lands from the Greenbelt and provide input on the City's priorities and expectations with respect to any private development proposals. The open house included a staff presentation, moderated question and answer session and was attended by approximately 450 people with approximately 200 people having to be turned away due to venue capacity.
- An online survey on Engage Hamilton that launched on August 21, 2023 and closed on September 8, 2023 and received 533 responses.
- The September 14, 2023 special meeting of Planning Committee held at the Ancaster Fair Grounds at which Planning Committee received 150 written and 44 oral submissions. The meeting was attended by approximately 525 residents.

In addition to this engagement the City received or were copied on 111 e-mails from residents providing input on these lands. Staff submitted two reports (PED23046(b) and PED23046(c)) which summarized the interim results of Public Engagement that had occurred leading up to the special meeting of Planning Committee.

What we heard

Of the public submissions made through the online survey, open house comment sheets, Planning Committee oral and written submissions and separate e-mail submissions, 684 (77.4%) voiced objections or concerns to the Provincial decision to remove these lands from the Greenbelt Plan and 56 (6.3%) were supportive of development of these lands. 143 (16.3%) submissions were directly related to potential development objectives and community benefits and did not specify opposition or support of the Provincial decision to enable development of the lands.

Staff have summarized all public input received in Appendix "A" attached to Report PED23046(d), breaking down and categorizing the feedback both thematically and within the context of development objectives and community benefits for the three areas in Hamilton removed from the Greenbelt Plan Area by the Province. It should be noted responses may have referenced multiple themes.

Of all responses received (684 total) from residents that opposed the lands removal from the Greenbelt Plan, the top themes received were:

- General Opposition (358 references) – meaning responses indicating opposition to the removal of the Greenbelt lands without identifying specific reasons;
- Lack of Transparency on the Process for Removing Greenbelt Lands (250 references) – meaning responses which indicate the process for removing the lands from the Greenbelt was not transparent including reference to the Auditor General’s Report and the Integrity Commissioner’s Report;
- Intensification in Urban Area (204 references) – meaning responses identifying intensification and new development should be contained within the existing urban boundary including reference to Council’s direction for no urban boundary expansion;
- Environmental Protection (160 references) – meaning responses referencing negative climate change impacts resulting from the development of the lands;
- Does Not Address Housing Crisis (145 references) - meaning responses indicating the development of the Greenbelt removal lands is not appropriate to address the housing crisis and the development of single detached homes will not be financially accessible to much of the public;
- Infrastructure Deficit / Financial Implications (110 references) – meaning responses identifying an existing infrastructure deficit within the entire City and the financial implications of providing infrastructure to service development in the Greenbelt removal lands, including concern about increased taxes;
- Farmland Protection (108 references) – meaning responses identifying concern about the loss of existing farmland including reference to food insecurity; and,
- Other themes that emerged from residents that were in opposition include climate change, generational inequality, and lack of Indigenous consultation.

Of all response received (56 total) that were supportive of development of these lands, the top themes received were:

- Supporting of Residential Development (35 references) – meaning responses indicating the lands removed from the greenbelt plan is appropriate for residential development including reference to surrounding land uses;

- Addition of Book Road lands (24 references) – meaning responses specifically referencing the addition of the Book Road lands to the Greenbelt Plan area in 2017;
- Inappropriate for Farmland (20 references) – meaning responses indicating the lands removed from the Greenbelt Plan are no longer appropriate or productive for farmland; and,
- Lack of Transparency on Process for Greenbelt Lands (18 references) – meaning responses indicating lack of transparency related to the process for identifying lands to be included within the Greenbelt Plan area.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Public Engagement Report

Through the online survey, open house and special meeting of Planning Committee the city received a significant amount of community input. While the City's consultation was primarily structured on the basis that the Government of Ontario would approve development of these lands through Minister's Zoning Orders, the opinions and beliefs expressed also speak broadly to the values and priorities of Hamilton residents respecting amendments to the Greenbelt Plan. Therefore, staff recommend that the Greenbelt Plan Public Engagement 2023 Summary Report (see Appendix "A" attached to Report PED23046(d)) be made public and submitted to the Government of Ontario to be considered as part of future Greenbelt Plan reviews.

Next Steps - Notification of Provincial Decision to Reinstate Greenbelt Lands

To ensure residents that participated in the City's earlier consultation are notified and aware of the Provincial decision to reinstate the lands to the Greenbelt Plan, staff will undertake the following:

- Updating the City's webpage;
- Sending letters to property owners within lands that had been removed from the Greenbelt Plan Area in 2022 as well as property owners within 240 metres of these lands to inform them of the decision; and,
- Sending an e-mail to everyone that signed in at the open house.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Staff could not provide the engagement summary report to the Province however this is not recommended in order to recognize the significant amount of public responses received through the City's extensive engagement efforts.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report PED23046(d) - Greenbelt Plan Public Engagement 2023
Summary Report

Appendix “B” to Report PED23046(d) - Location Map – Lands Removed from the
Greenbelt Plan

CT/JA:sd