



To: **Committee of the Whole**

Agenda Section: Corporate Services
Division: Engineering, Planning and Environment
Department: Planning

Item Number: **CCW - 2021-265**

Meeting Date: August 10, 2021

Subject: Municipal Comprehensive Review – Interim Update on Current Interest Expressed for Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

Recommendation

That Item CCW 2021-265, dated August 10, 2021, regarding an interim update on the current interest expressed for settlement area boundary expansions through the County Municipal Comprehensive Review, be received.

Executive Summary

This item provides an update on one component of the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), which relates to the potential need for expansion of settlement area boundaries. The province has allocated population and employment growth to Simcoe County to the year 2051 in accordance with *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2020* (Growth Plan). The Growth Plan dictates that planning for this allocation must occur via the MCR exercise, and that settlement area expansions to accommodate this growth (if required), will be implemented by the MCR.

In anticipation of that possibility, County staff have been actively tracking any requests made for a property to be considered for a potential settlement area expansion. County planning staff, along with the MCR consulting team, felt it would be beneficial for County Council and the public to be aware of the interest expressed to date for settlement area boundary expansions throughout the County.

It is important to note that this is an interim update only, and that the County planning department and MCR team remains interested in knowing if other landowners exist that also want to be added to this inventory. It is still to be determined by the Land Needs Assessment process of the MCR, whether any settlement area expansions will be necessary, and if so, which lower-tier municipalities will require expansions, and which will not.

The final determination of whether any settlement area boundary expansions will be required in the County will be provided to County Council in a future report.

Background/Analysis/Options

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (Growth Plan) that took effect on August 28, 2020, requires that the County undertake a MCR. It is the responsibility of upper-tier and single-tier municipalities that are within the Growth Plan policy area to complete the MCR. An MCR is a planning exercise which results in a process to comprehensively bring Official Plans into conformity with the Growth Plan. Various policy matters are impacted and require updating in both the County and lower-tier official plans because of the MCR. One key component of the MCR relates to the population and employment forecasts contained in Schedule 3 to the Growth Plan, which will be used in the planning and management of growth in the County to the year 2051 planning horizon.

As previously outlined for County Council in past MCR reports, and as discussed by the MCR project team consultants at the Statutory Public Meeting on June 8th of this year, a key component of the MCR is to determine how to manage the population and employment allocated by the province until the year 2051.

Simcoe County has been allocated by the province a 2051 population and employment target of 555,000 people and 198,000 jobs. This represents an approximate increase of 55% and 69% respectively from present. Part of the role of the MCR project will be to complete a Land Needs Assessment (LNA) based on a prescribed methodology provided via provincial guidance. Part of the results of this LNA exercise will be to determine whether the County and each of the 16 lower-tier municipalities has sufficient development land available to accommodate this future population and employment growth. If the conclusion of the LNA work demonstrates that more lands will be necessary to accommodate growth, then the MCR exercise will be used to make more development land available through implementing a County Official Plan Amendment for settlement area boundary expansions where they are determined to be required.

At this point in the MCR project it is important to gather as much relevant information as possible and knowing where there is strong interest in growth throughout the County forms part of that key information gathering process. It is relevant to know where potential settlement area expansion interest exists during the MCR project, because it is only through the MCR that a settlement area boundary expansion can occur.

The County planning department continues to accumulate information regarding any interested property owner that would like to host future development by way of a settlement area boundary expansion. Despite a high level of development interest throughout much of the County, it is important to be aware that the Growth Plan has existing policies which will shape where and how growth can and cannot take place, including where it is and is not appropriate to expand settlements. If the LNA work of the MCR does determine settlement area boundary expansions are required, the Growth Plan

policies prioritize generally where these growth areas should be, and therefore where any potential expansions should occur. The Growth Plan policies also direct how to evaluate a settlement area boundary expansion. As a result, not every submission expressing interest for a settlement area boundary expansion will be appropriate based on the pre-existing policy criteria of the Growth Plan, even if the MCR determines that expansions are required to accommodate the County's future growth.

Some key policies from the Growth Plan which will influence growth management outcomes from the MCR include the following:

- Development will be directed to settlement areas;
- The “vast majority” of growth will be directed to settlement areas with a delineated built boundary, have existing or planned municipal water and wastewater, and can support achieving a complete community;
- Growth will be limited for rural settlements, with no existing or planned municipal water and wastewater systems;
- Urban form must optimize infrastructure through a more compact built form;
- Residential development must provide a diverse range and mix of housing options;
- Growth must support environmental and agricultural protection.

In addition, the Growth Plan has policies for growth management that relate to Simcoe County specifically, and further influence how we implement this component of the MCR. For example:

- *Primary settlement areas* (PSA) must continue to be identified. These PSA's are the Town of Collingwood, Town's of Midland and Penetanguishene, the settlements of Alcona, Bradford and Alliston.
- Growth forecasts are to be allocated such that “...a significant portion of population and employment growth is directed to lower-tier municipalities that contain *primary settlement areas*”.
- Also, the Town of Innisfil, the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury and the Town of New Tecumseth “...will direct a significant portion of population and employment growth forecasted to the applicable *primary settlement areas*.” In the case of these three municipalities, these are the settlements of Alcona, Bradford, and Alliston.

Notwithstanding the clear direction with regards to prioritizing growth to the County PSA's, growth will still be necessary in other key settlements as well. Accordingly, the MCR will assist in making the determination of where and how the County must grow in non-PSA settlements. As a result, it remains important to be as aware as possible of all the properties throughout the County with owner's that would be interested in accommodating future population or employment. County planning staff will continue to work with our lower-tier municipal partners throughout the MCR project to identify as many of these interested parties and land holdings as we can to ensure we have accurate information relating to the large amount of growth interest shown thus far.

Inventory of Interested Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

To date, County planning staff can advise that there have been numerous submissions made for a settlement area boundary expansion request to accommodate some of the population or employment allocation to 2051.

These requests have generally been brought to staff via written submissions over the course of the last 18 months. There has not been a formal request for these submissions as part of the MCR work plan, therefore, this interest has come from parties that are following the MCR project and proactively reached out to advise staff that they are interested in accommodating future growth. Some of these properties County Council will already be familiar with due to their inclusion as a submission for the statutory public meeting hosted on June 8th of this year. Most of the other properties have been identified through direct correspondence at various times with County and/or lower-tier municipal staff.

Opportunities relating to Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZO's) have also been included in this inventory. These relate to any MZO County staff is aware of that if approved, have or will result in an expansion to a settlement area boundary.

The list of all known properties that a settlement area boundary expansion has been proposed for, is identified in chart format via Schedule 1 to this report.

All lands that are contained within the inventory of interested properties from Schedule 1, have also been mapped. The maps relating to this inventory have been provided via Schedule 2 to this report.

A numeric summary of some statistics relating to what County staff have been able to observe about these properties is included via Schedule 3 to this report.

Some of the key observations include:

- **11** – total municipalities that have at least one request for a settlement area boundary expansion.
- **79** – total number of requests for a settlement area boundary.
- **83%** - represents the combined proportion of the interest for a settlement area boundary expansion coming from New Tecumseth, Bradford West Gwillimbury and Innisfil (based on land area).
- **6429** hectares (15886 acres) - the total land area that County staff is aware of that relate to a request for a settlement area boundary expansion to date.

In order to assist with putting this volume of requests into perspective, and the implications of what this amount of land area could mean translated into growth, a high-level conceptual scenario is illustrated as follows:

- 6429 hectares (gross land area)

- 4822 hectares (net land area factoring in 25% undevelopable due to constraints)
- 50 people and jobs per hectare (Growth Plan Density Target for Greenfield Land)
 - 37 people per hectare and 13 jobs per hectare

Using these conceptual variables results in an estimate that the land area currently proposed for settlement area expansions could accommodate an approximate minimum of 180,000 people and 63,000 jobs.

In comparison, the Growth Plan allocation for the County to 2051 results in the need to accommodate 198,000 additional people and 81,000 new jobs. It's important to note however that a minimum of 40% of the residential population is targeted to occur in the current settlement boundary built up area, therefore only approximately 118,000 people of the 198,000 that have been allocated, are eligible to be accommodated on new greenfield lands. Furthermore, when considering that many municipalities still have significant undeveloped greenfield lands within their settlements already, it is anticipated that much fewer than 118,000 people would need to be accommodated on new development lands.

It is acknowledged that greater detail will be completed on the matter of Land Needs Assessment via the formal MCR process. The conceptual variables used are subject to ongoing technical analysis and may ultimately vary by location within the County and/or according to Council's desire to achieve a different pattern of settlement, all of which will be determined through the MCR. Nonetheless, it is clear based on some of the basic facts and assumptions currently available that the amount of land that has been proposed for candidate settlement area boundary expansion opportunity to date, already significantly exceeds what the County anticipates will be necessary to accommodate the growth that has been allocated by the province.

Conclusion

This information about the interest in settlement area boundary expansion growth due to the MCR, is being brought forward to County Council and the public as an interim update. County staff and the MCR team are not presently evaluating these submissions, and no decisions regarding the suitability of any of the properties is necessary from County Council. This inventory of properties is strictly for information only and is being introduced to demonstrate to County Council and the public the scope and scale of interest received to date relating to future growth. It should not be assumed however, that any property included on this list will be used for future development via settlement area boundary expansion. No evaluation or decisions relating to the potential need for settlement area boundary expansions have been made yet through the MCR work program.

County planning staff will continue to build upon this inventory and include this data in the growth management component of the MCR. Knowing where the market demand for development exists will be of assistance when and if it is determined that a municipality requires a settlement area boundary expansion to accommodate its allocated population and employment to the year 2051.

The information and inventory of properties being reported on is therefore, not expected to be an exhaustive list, but rather should be considered a “snapshot” of the interest received to date.

If the MCR concludes that some land must be considered for new growth, inclusion on this list is not a prerequisite for a property to be considered. All properties of identified interest have been added to this list if requested, without any consideration of their actual suitability to accommodate growth. It may be possible that if a particular settlement does require expansion that the most suitable property(ies) to accommodate this growth may not come from this list.

The MCR process as established by the County of Simcoe work plan requires that if any municipality needs a settlement area boundary expansion, the lower-tier municipality will direct which lands are preferred to be used. Final decision on any necessary settlement area boundary expansions is the responsibility of the County of Simcoe.

Financial and Resource Implications:

Funds for this project have been allocated in the 2021 Operating Budget.

Relationship to Corporate Strategic Plan

[2015-2025 Strategic Plan](#) – This matter is part of the background information necessary to consider when completing the County’s MCR. The MCR will lead to an updated Official Plan, which is a key input to the County’s Strategic Plan. This matter therefore relates to Growth Related Service Delivery, Strengthened Social, Health and Educational Opportunities, Economic & Destination Development, and Environmental Sustainability.

Reference Documents

- **CCW 2021-154** (April 27, 2021) Update on the County’s Municipal Comprehensive Review
- **PAC 2021-076** (February 25, 2021) Update on the County’s Municipal Comprehensive Review
- **PAC 2020-127** (April 14, 2020) Update on the County’s Municipal Comprehensive Review
- **CCW 17-269** (September 12, 2017) Overview of Growth Plan, 2017 and the Potential Impacts on County and Local Municipal Planning Matters

Attachments

Schedule 1 – List of Properties Interested in a Settlement Area Boundary Expansion
Schedule 2 – Mapped Properties Interested in a Settlement Area Boundary Expansion
Schedule 3 – Summary of Key Facts

Prepared By Dan Amadio, MCIP, RPP, Manager of Planning
Greg Marek, MCIP, RPP Manager of Planning

Approvals

David Parks, Director, Planning, Economic Development,
Transit and Airport Services

Rob Elliot, General Manager, Engineering, Planning and
Environment

Trevor Wilcox, General Manager, Corporate Performance

Mark Aitken, Chief Administrative Officer

Date

July 26, 2021

July 26, 2021

July 30, 2021

August 3, 2021