

REPORT

Planning and Development Council

Meeting Date: January 17, 2022

FROM: Planning Services Department

DATE: January 4, 2022

SUBJECT: Update Report - Regional Official Plan Review, Integrated Growth Management Strategy, January 17, 2022

LOCATION: Town of Oakville

WARD: Town-wide

Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report titled *Update Report - Regional Official Plan Review, Integrated Growth Management Strategy, January 17, 2022*, be received.
2. That the report titled *Update Report - Regional Official Plan Review, Integrated Growth Management Strategy, January 17, 2022*, be endorsed, and submitted to Halton Region as part of the Regional Official Plan Review.
3. That the report titled *Update Report - Regional Official Plan Review, Integrated Growth Management Strategy, January 17, 2022*, be forwarded for information to the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, Credit Valley Conservation, Grand River Conservation Authority and Conservation Halton.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- This report presents an overview of Halton Region's Draft Preferred Growth Concept (Draft PGC) to the year 2051, as well as perspectives from town planning staff about how it might affect local community planning in Oakville.
- Throughout the Regional Official Plan Review (ROPR) and Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS) process, town staff have consistently expressed support for a Growth Concept for Halton Region that minimizes settlement area boundary expansions, directs growth to strategic growth areas, encourages transit-supportive, compact mixed use development, and addresses the climate emergency.

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- The Draft PGC proposes to implement the Regional Urban Structure of strategic growth areas and higher order transit corridors. By extension, this would implement Oakville's town-wide urban structure. Most population, housing and employment growth from 2031 to 2051 would be accommodated within the Region's existing approved settlement areas. However, the Draft PGC also proposes settlement area boundary expansions.
 - The proposed settlement area boundary expansions comprise a total of 2,120 hectares (ha) of agricultural land in Milton and Halton Hills to accommodate new greenfield growth: 1,050 ha for population and housing, and 1,070 ha for employment growth. The Draft PGC suggests that this is growth that cannot be fully accommodated within the region's existing Designated Greenfield Areas (DGA) and Delineated Built-Up Area (DBUA), within the constructs of provincial policy targets and land needs assessment expectations.
 - *A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019* (Growth Plan, 2019) provides growth forecasts of population and employment – people and jobs – to be accommodated across the Plan area to the horizon year of 2051. The forecast for Halton Region is for 1,100,000 people and 500,000 jobs to the year 2051.
 - Halton Region, including the Town of Oakville, is already planned to the year 2031 for a total of 768,000 people and 350,000 jobs. The current ROPR is about planning to accommodate an additional 332,000 people and 150,000 jobs for the period from 2031 to 2051. Today, Halton Region has approximately 600,000 people and just under 300,000 jobs.
 - The Draft PGC allocates population and employment growth from 2031 to 2051. This is required by the Growth Plan and represents the planned minimum amount of growth to be accommodated. These figures do not represent a cap but rather should be viewed as a starting point with the understanding that additional growth could be achieved.
 - For Oakville, the Draft PGC proposes a 2051 population of 375,000 people and a 2051 employment total of 180,000 jobs within the town's existing settlement area south of Highway 407.
 - Town staff remain of the opinion that settlement area boundary expansions should be viewed as a last option to be used when opportunities to accommodate growth within the existing settlement areas are exhausted. While town staff question whether the expansions proposed in the Draft PGC will be needed by the end of the planning horizon, certain strategic expansions could be supported where warranted for the purposes of providing community infrastructure and developing complete communities.
 - The Draft PGC is also proposing a region-wide minimum intensification target for new residential growth of 45%. This is below the minimum 50% required by the provincial Growth Plan. The remainder of new residential growth (55%)

would be allocated to the existing DGA and to new DGA. Town staff offer qualified support for the reduced minimum intensification target since the Draft PGC continues to support Oakville's town-wide urban structure by concentrating growth in strategic growth areas in the existing DGA.

BACKGROUND:

The Regional Official Plan (ROP) for Halton Region is undergoing a five-year review as required by the provincial *Planning Act*. It will update policies in conformity with *A Place to Grow: The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019* (Growth Plan, 2019), and other provincial plans and policies, in respect of the protection of lands and resources, development and the management of population and employment growth for the period 2031 to 2051.

Halton Region is already planned to the year 2031 as a result of the previous ROPR process from 2009 called *Sustainable Halton*. Likewise, the majority of the Town of Oakville is planned to the year 2031 as a result of the original Livable Oakville Plan process in 2009.

Halton Region is undertaking the current ROPR in partnership with its local municipalities of the Town of Oakville, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills and the Town of Milton. A wide range of residents, businesses, stakeholder groups, governmental agencies and Indigenous Communities are also engaged in this planning process.

A key component of the ROPR is the Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS) to address the Growth Plan, 2019 requirement to accommodate an additional 482,000 people and 222,000 jobs in Halton Region over the period 2031 to 2051 for a total of 1,100,000 people and 500,000 jobs by 2051. Over the past year, the IGMS included the following milestones:

- February 2021 – The Growth Concepts Discussion Paper is released through Report No. LPS18-21. These four Growth Concepts were designed to test where and how the region could manage future population and employment growth.
- April 2021 – Regional Council directed staff to develop an additional Growth Concept that provided no new settlement area boundary expansion as well as a comparative analysis of greenhouse gas emissions from the Growth Concepts.
- July 2021 – The ROPR work plan and schedule were updated and a summary of public input is released through Report No. LPS51-21. The report also outlined a set of Key Principles for the development of the Draft PGC.
- On November 17, 2021, Regional Council participated in an interactive [Workshop Meeting](#). At that meeting, regional staff presented a background information document titled *Regional Official Plan Review: Preferred Growth Concept and Draft Land Needs Assessment*.

Town staff have participated in the ROPR since it was initiated in 2014 and has provided regular updates to Oakville Council. At the March 22, 2021 [Special Meeting of Planning and Development Council](#), Oakville Council received the following:

- Item 3. Regional Official Plan Review - Growth Concepts Discussion Paper - Integrated Growth Management Strategy, March 11, 2021
- Item 4. Regional Official Plan Review - Draft Regional Plan Amendment 48 - An Amendment to Define a Regional Structure, March 11, 2021

The most recent update was at the May 10, 2021 [Planning and Development Council](#) meeting where Oakville Council received the staff report titled *Regional Official Plan Review – Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Draft Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 – May 10, 2021*. That staff report conveyed the following key messages:

- The Livable Oakville Official Plan is the town’s growth management strategy and the ongoing official plan review is focused on implementing a town-wide urban structure.
- Oakville’s town-wide urban structure is intended to:
 - protect natural heritage, open space and cultural heritage;
 - maintain the character of residential areas; and,
 - direct growth to an identified system of nodes & corridors.
- For Oakville to maximize the benefits of accommodating population and employment growth as required by the province, the PGC resulting from the IGMS must:
 - support existing local urban structure;
 - minimize settlement area boundary expansions onto the agriculture land base; and,
 - support the creation of complete communities in a compact urban form with sustainable transportation choices.

The May 10, 2021 report also presented an overview and highlights from town staff regarding then Draft Regional Official Plan Amendment 48 (ROPA 48), the first amendment to be considered by Regional Council as part of the Regional Official Plan Review.

ROPA 48, which implements components of the Regional Urban Structure to establish a hierarchy of strategic growth areas in the Regional Official Plan, was adopted by Regional Council in July 2021. It was subsequently modified and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on November 10, 2021.

The modifications are reasonable and relate to Protected Major Transit Station Areas, Regional Nodes, and Urban Growth Centres. As the Minister’s decision is

final and not subject to appeal, ROPA 48 as modified and approved came into effect November 10, 2021.

On November 24, 2021, Regional staff reported on the provincial decision to approve ROPA 48 through Report No. LPS91-21 to [Halton Region Council](#).

Oakville's town-wide urban structure is embedded in the approved ROPA 48 with particular emphasis on an identified system of Nodes and Corridors (Appendix A). These areas comprise the town's strategic growth areas as defined in the Growth Plan, and are intended to accommodate a significant portion of Oakville and Halton's required intensification.

Sustainable, transit-supportive, growth and intensification within a system of strategic growth areas provides greater certainty for the long-term protection of important landscape features such as the agricultural land base and helps to maintain the character of residential areas.

Throughout the ROPR and IGMS process, town staff have consistently expressed support for a Growth Concept for Halton Region that minimizes settlement area boundary expansions, directs growth to strategic growth areas, encourages transit-supportive, compact mixed use development, and addresses the climate emergency.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

This report presents an overview of the region's Draft Preferred Growth Concept (PGC) in the context of the province's Growth Plan, 2019, as well as perspectives from town planning staff about how it might affect local community planning in Oakville.

Overview of the Draft Preferred Growth Concept

The Draft PGC (Figure 1) proposes a strategy to accommodate population and employment growth in Halton Region from 2031 to 2051 as required by the Growth Plan, 2019.

The Draft PGC proposes to implement the Regional Urban Structure of strategic growth areas and higher order transit corridors. By extension, this would implement Oakville's town-wide urban structure.

The Draft PGC proposes to accommodate most new population, housing and employment growth within the existing approved settlement areas of the region for the period from 2031 to 2051. However, the Draft PGC also proposes settlement area boundary expansions.

Figure 1: Halton's Draft Preferred Growth Concept



The Draft PGC is also proposing a region-wide minimum intensification target for new residential growth of 45%. This is below the minimum 50% required by the

provincial Growth Plan. The remainder of new residential growth (55%) would be allocated to the existing DGA and to new DGA.

The proposed settlement area boundary expansions within the Draft PGC comprise a total of 2,120 hectares (ha) to accommodate new greenfield population and employment growth. Based on the assumptions and analysis undertaken by the region, the Draft PGC suggests that this is growth that cannot be fully accommodated within the existing Designated Greenfield Areas (DGA) and Delineated Built-Up Area (DBUA) of the Region within the constructs of provincial policy targets and land needs assessment expectations.

- The Draft PGC proposes an expansion of 1,050 ha of New Community Area (Figure 1) in order to accommodate a market-based supply of ground-oriented housing demand, as determined through the Region's land needs assessment. The expansion area also includes other elements of complete communities such as parks, institutional and commercial uses.
- In terms of employment, an expansion of 1,070 ha of New Employment Area is proposed (Figure 1) to accommodate forecasted market demand for manufacturing, warehousing, logistics and other similar uses needing access to 400 series highways.

The proposed settlement area boundary expansions are concentrated on the agricultural land base within the towns of Milton and Halton Hills. Approximately two thirds of the total expansion area would be in Milton, and one third in Halton Hills (Figure 1).

Population and Employment Growth by Local Municipality

The Draft PGC allocates population and employment growth from 2031 to 2051. This is required by the Growth Plan, 2019 and represents the planned minimum amount of growth to be accommodated. These numbers do not represent a cap but rather should be viewed as a starting point with the understanding that additional growth could be achieved.

The Draft PGC allocates population growth from 2031 to 2051 by local municipality according to Table 1. This population growth is proposed to be distributed across the region within the Regional Urban Structure as well as the existing DGA and the new DGA coming from settlement area boundary expansions.

Table 1: Population Growth by Local Municipality, Draft PGC

	Population		
Municipality	2021	2031	2051
Burlington	195,000	218,000	265,000
Oakville	222,000	280,000	375,000
Milton	138,000	187,000	335,000
Halton Hills	66,000	83,000	125,000
Halton Region	621,000	768,000	1,100,000

Likewise, the Draft PGC allocates employment from 2031 to 2051 by local municipality according to Table 2. This employment growth is proposed to be distributed across the region within the Regional Urban Structure as well as the existing DGA and the new DGA coming from settlement area boundary expansions along the Hwy 407 and 401 corridors.

Table 2: Employment Growth by Local Municipality, Draft PGC

	Employment		
Municipality	2021	2031	2051
Burlington	98,000	106,000	125,000
Oakville	111,000	140,000	180,000
Milton	44,500	68,000	130,000
Halton Hills	24,500	36,000	65,000
Halton Region	278,000	350,000	500,000

Provincial Growth Plan - Growth Management Essentials

In an effort to ensure a consistent understanding of the terms used in discussions about Halton's Draft PGC, a high-level review of the Growth Plan and the related Land Needs Assessment Methodology is provided below.

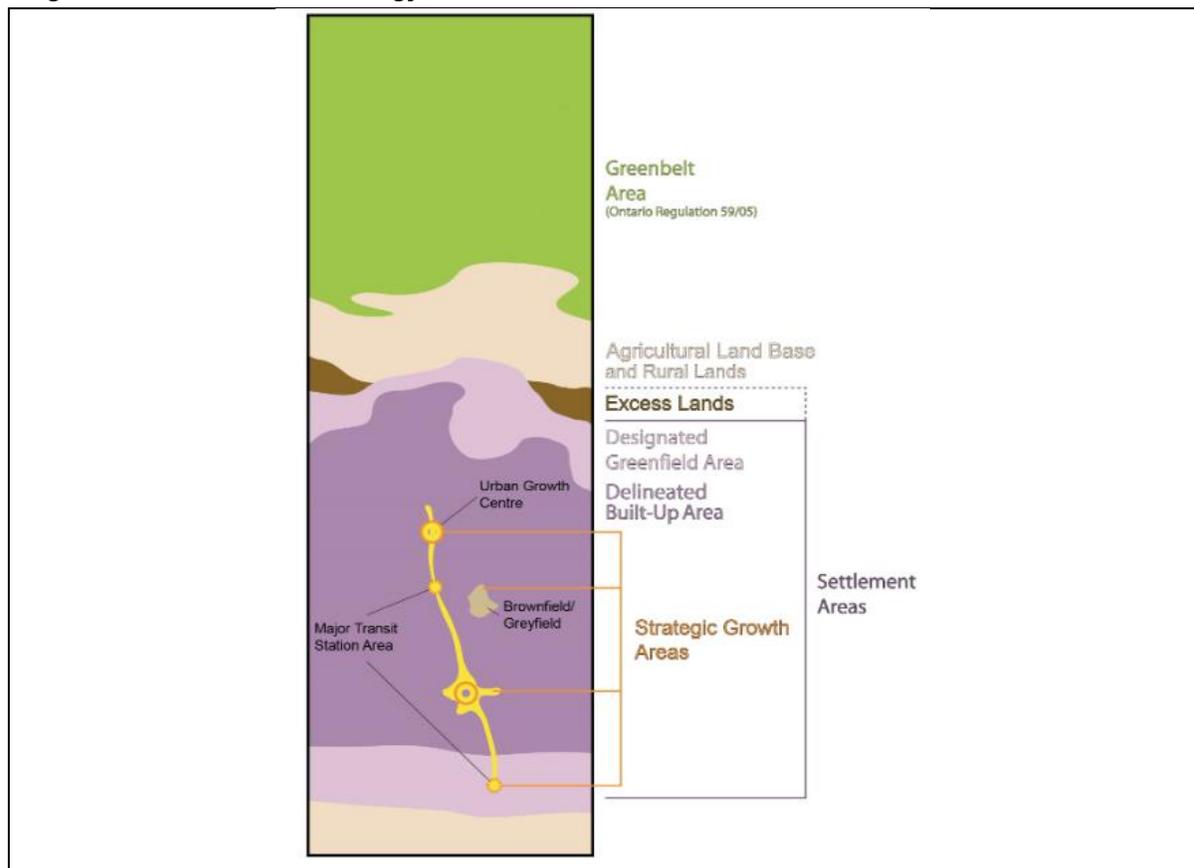
Growth Plan, 2019

The core principle of the Growth Plan is to mitigate negative environmental, economic and human health impacts associated with sprawling, un-coordinated growth in this region of the province.

The Growth Plan identifies density and intensification targets, strategic growth areas, employment areas, and settlement area restrictions as the tools to help guide the development of efficient, compact and complete communities and to act as the basis to guide decisions on how land is developed, resources are managed and public dollars are invested.

Figure 2 breaks down the land use terms that are used in respect of growth management and intensification in the Growth Plan. The region's IGMS is focused on accommodating required growth by finding a balance between intensification within existing Settlement Areas and growth into newly expanded Settlement Areas. The latter would constitute the addition of New Designated Greenfield Area at the expense of the Agricultural Land Base and Rural Lands.

Figure 2: Land Use Terminology, Growth Plan, 2019



For settlement area boundary expansions to be considered, policy 2.2.8.2 of the Growth Plan indicates that opportunities to accommodate forecasted growth through intensification and in the existing DGA must have been exhausted.

In Halton Region, there are not any Excess Lands, as shown in Figure 2. Excess Lands would be previously designated DGA lands that a municipality has determined are no longer needed to accommodate forecasted growth.

Policy 2.2.2.1 of the Growth Plan requires that a minimum of 50% of all residential development occurring annually in Halton Region be within the DBUA. Only this residential growth is considered “intensification” in a Growth Plan context, and 50% is the region’s minimum intensification target.

The balance of new residential growth – growth not accommodated through intensification – may occur in the DGA at a density of 65 people and jobs per hectare. In Oakville, the line between the DBUA and the DGA is generally Dundas Street.

Policy 2.2.2.4 of the Growth Plan also provides that the region may request that an appropriate alternative target be established (by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing) if it is demonstrated that the minimum intensification target of 50% cannot be achieved.

It is recognized that the term “intensification” is more broadly understood to mean the development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists, as it is defined in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020. This is an important distinction because, for the purposes of the Growth Plan new development inside the DBUA counts as intensification irrespective of unit type, density or prior existing uses. At the same time, any unit built outside of the DBUA line is considered to be greenfield development and does not count towards meeting the Growth Plan intensification target — again, irrespective of unit type or density.

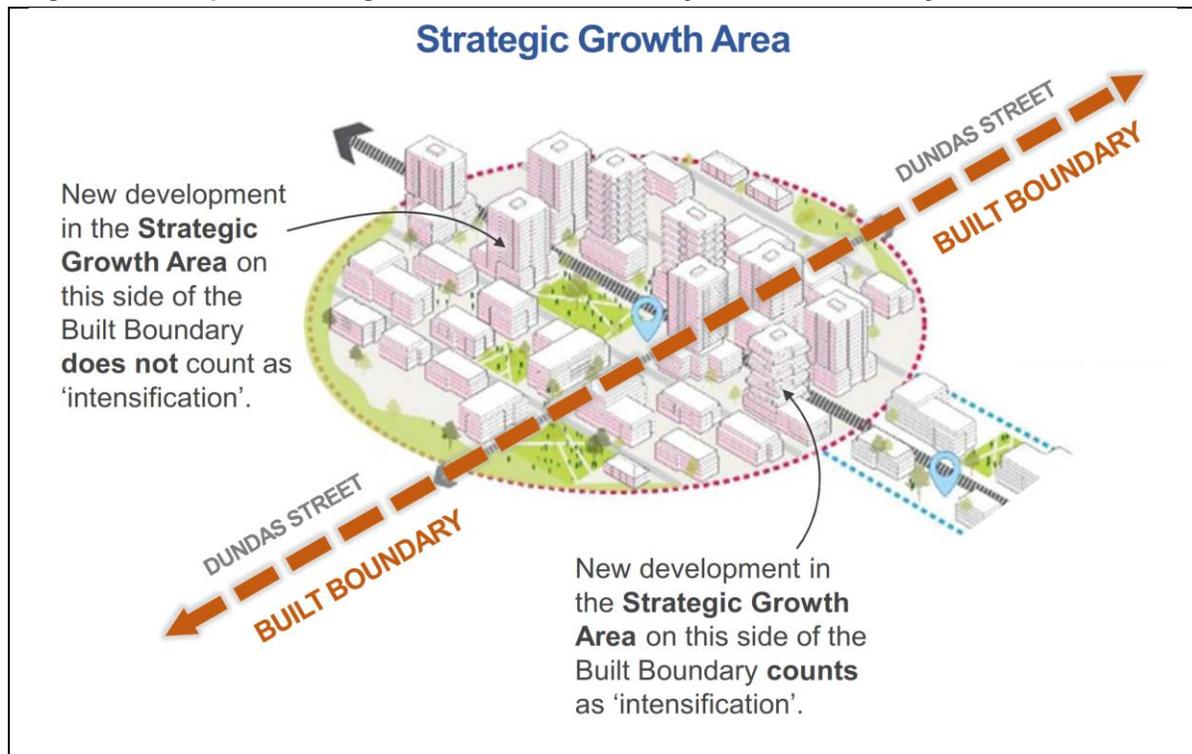
For Oakville, this means that an apartment building built on the south side of Dundas Street would count towards meeting the minimum intensification target, but an identical building directly across the street on the north side of Dundas Street would not count towards meeting the minimum intensification target (Figure 3).

It also means that high density, compact, transit-supportive nodes in the DGA do not count as intensification, even though they may mirror the built form and support the intent of intensification policy. This matter is addressed later as it relates to key elements of the Draft PGC.

Policy directions for intensification targets and density targets required by the Growth Plan, 2019 provide minimum parameters for assessing land needs and justifying settlement area boundary expansions, if needed. Expansions beyond the

current settlement area boundaries are only to be considered once intensification options on existing settlement area lands have been exhausted.

Figure 3: Example of Strategic Growth Area divided by the Built Boundary



Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan, 2019

Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan provides growth forecasts of population and employment – people and jobs – to be accommodated across the Plan area to the horizon year of 2051. The forecast for the Halton Region is for 1,100,000 people and 500,000 jobs to the year 2051.

Halton Region, including the Town of Oakville, is already planned to the year 2031 for a total of 768,000 people and 350,000 jobs. The current ROPR is about planning to accommodate an additional 332,000 people and 150,000 jobs for the period from 2031 to 2051. Today, Halton Region has approximately 600,000 people and just under 300,000 jobs.

Land Needs Assessment Methodology

The Growth Plan 2019 prescribes a Land Needs Assessment (LNA) methodology to determine the total quantity of land needed to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth to the year 2051. This LNA is a key consideration for the region's IGMS and the development of the PGC.

The LNA builds on Schedule 3 – Forecast, of the Growth Plan, with a forecast of housing demand, including an assessment of current and future market-based needs, in order to determine land needs region-wide to 2051. Housing demand is further broken down by housing type (i.e., singles, townhouses and apartment units) through the LNA.

For the housing needed to accommodate forecasted population, the LNA evaluates existing housing supply against forecasted housing demand as influenced by demographic groups, dwelling types and density targets.

The LNA applies a similar approach to accommodating the employment forecast by evaluating supply and demand for jobs by three different types of employment: employment lands employment, population-related employment, and major office.

If the demand for housing and jobs exceeds the planned supply, the LNA converts this demand (need) into an amount of new settlement area required to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth to 2051. This type of result from the LNA is what triggers the consideration of settlement area boundary expansions.

The forecasted housing demand, in particular, is influenced by many factors including an assessment of current and future market-based needs. One of the directions of the LNA is that the market assessment informs the development of the market forecast based on housing type, for example.

It is important to note that “market” is but one of many important considerations when developing a Preferred Growth Concept for Halton through the ROPR.

Testing Growth Management in the Region’s Five Growth Concepts

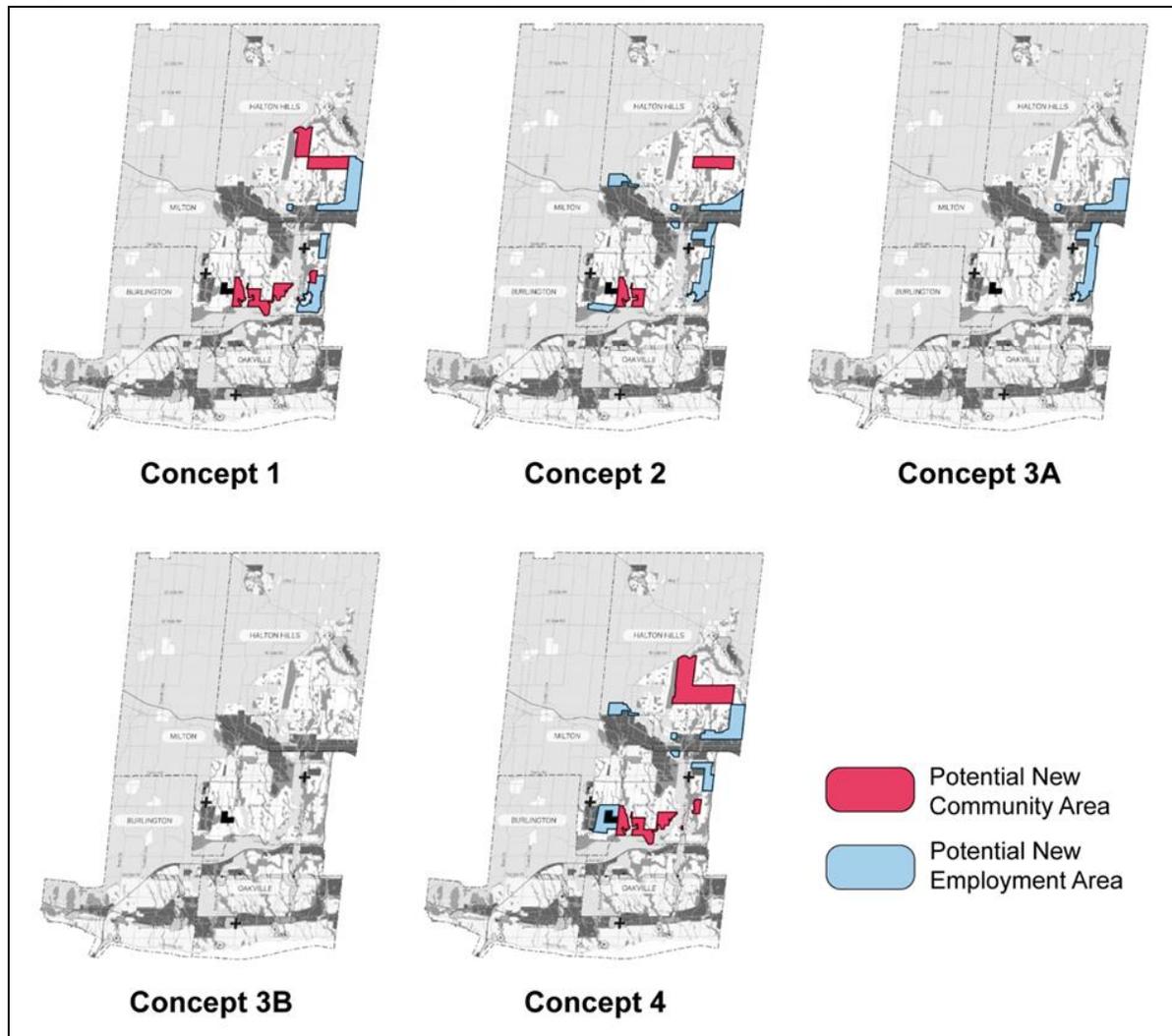
The purpose of the IGMS is to establish where and how provincially required population and employment growth will be accommodated within Halton Region in a manner that:

- Meets provincial and regional growth management policies and targets
- Supports local municipal plans and priorities
- Takes a stewardship approach from environmental, economic and social perspectives
- Extends the Regional Official Plan planning horizon from 2031 to 2051.

A series of Growth Concepts to test how and where the region could grow to 2051 were thus developed (Figure 4). The Growth Concepts vary based on:

- Different outlooks for growth and types of development such as transit-supportive densities focused on strategic growth areas
- Rates of growth
- Targets for densification and intensification
- Type and location of new housing units needed
- Amount of Community and Employment Area required to accommodate growth
- Total amount of settlement area boundary expansion lands

Figure 4: Settlement Area Boundary Expansions by Growth Concept



The region's Growth Concepts represent different outlooks for managing growth including intensification rates, type and location of new housing units needed and

varied amounts of settlement area boundary expansion. The amount of settlement area boundary expansions, which is the increase in supply of lands to be designated urban, appears to be the main distinguishing aspect between the Growth Concepts.

Figure 4 illustrates potential settlement area expansions by Growth Concept with Growth Concept 4 showing the most and Growth Concept 3B showing the least.

Ultimately, the region's recommended Preferred Growth Concept will have to find a balance between conforming to the planning policies of the Growth Plan and satisfying the market driven land supply considerations from the LNA.

Key Principles for the Development of a Preferred Growth Concept

The IGMS contains a set of key principles established by the region that are intended to guide development of a PGC:

- Confirming and supporting a Regional Urban Structure
- Setting an Ambitious and Achievable Intensification Target
- Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change
- Establishing a Broad Range and Mix of Housing
- Providing Complete Spectrum of Employment Opportunities
- Advancing Strategic Employment Land Conversions
- Setting Bold yet Achievable Community Area & Employment Area Density Targets
- Maintaining Strong Development Phasing Policies
- Ensuring Growth Proceeds without negative Fiscal Impacts
- Maximizing Agricultural Land Protection
- Further Enhancing the Natural Heritage System

In addition to the principles noted above, public consultation and an evaluation of the five Growth Concepts, combined with some elements of one or more of the Growth Concepts, have guided regional staff in the development of a Draft PGC that accommodates required growth in Halton to 2051. As discussed, a Draft PGC has been released and is currently under consideration.

Comparing the Draft PGC to the Growth Concepts

Table 3 below and the preceding Figure 4 provide a comparison between the Draft PGC and the original Growth Concepts. The Draft PGC is proposing a total

settlement area boundary expansion of 2,120 ha for population and employment growth combined. This most closely resembles Growth Concept 2 with respect to the amount of settlement area boundary expansion being contemplated.

Table 3: Settlement Area Expansions by Growth Concept and Draft PGC

	Growth Concept					
	1	2	3A	3B	4	DRAFT PGC
Potential New Community Area (ha)	1,460	730	0	0	2,080	1,050
Potential New Employment Area (ha)	1,170	1,100	980	0	1,220	1,070
Total Settlement Area Boundary Expansion (ha)	2,630	1,830	980	0	3,300	2,120

The five Growth Concepts met the required minimum intensification target of 50% of new residential growth to be allocated to the region's DBUA (Table 4). The Draft PGC does not meet this minimum intensification target and is proposing that only 45% of new residential growth be allocated to the DBUA. The remainder of new residential growth (55%) would be allocated to the existing DGA and to new DGA.

Table 4: Minimum Intensification Target by Growth Concept and Draft PGC

	Growth Concept				
	1	2	3A/3B	4	DRAFT PGC
Built-Up Area Intensification	51%	54%	56%	50%	45%

One of the main reasons for the difference between the minimum intensification target of Draft PGC and the Growth Concepts is from a recent town staff review of active development applications for apartment units in Oakville.

Compared to what was being forecast in the LNA, the review demonstrated a stronger market for apartment units in Oakville's existing DGA, particularly the Trafalgar Urban Core and Dundas Urban Core areas north of Dundas Street.

The review suggested that the actual market demand for apartments in the existing DGA of Oakville had already surpassed the levels being tested in Growth Concepts

1 and 4. On the face of it, it appears the LNA was under-estimating the market for apartments in Oakville's existing DGA.

As shown earlier in Figure 3, the Built Boundary in Oakville, the line that defines the difference between intensification and greenfield development, runs down the middle of a growth corridor (Dundas Urban Core) and splits the Uptown Core and Palermo Village growth nodes.

This means that only a portion of apartment units being built in these nodes and corridors (strategic growth areas) can be counted towards intensification while all of them will contribute to the creation of complete communities and walkable, transit-oriented neighbourhoods.

This unique condition combined with the strong market for apartment units in North Oakville indicated that perhaps the Growth Concepts were underestimating the number of apartment units that will be built in the existing DGA.

The Draft PGC has attempted to account for this discrepancy by transferring apartment units from Oakville's DBUA, also known as intensification growth, into Oakville's existing DGA. This had the effect of lowering the region-wide intensification rate to 45%, which is below the 50% policy requirement of the Growth Plan, 2019.

Town of Oakville Perspectives

Town staff have engaged with regional staff in a productive dialogue throughout the IGMS in order to address growth management across Halton Region and to support the implementation of Oakville's town-wide urban structure.

Town staff appreciate the complexities involved in managing provincially required population and employment growth at a regional scale while at the same time enabling local municipal plans and priorities. This is especially challenging when the local municipalities are at different stages of development and urban evolution.

Town staff are generally supportive of the Draft PGC as a compromise since it addresses a number of the key principles for the development of a PGC that have been previously reported. The following sections present some remaining concerns from town staff.

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

Town staff remain of the opinion that settlement area boundary expansions should be viewed as a last option to be used when opportunities to accommodate growth within the existing settlement areas are exhausted.

There are lands currently designated for urban development throughout the region that could accommodate additional population and employment growth beyond what the region has allocated through the IGMS. Minimizing new settlement area boundary expansions is also important since any expansion areas would be taken from the agricultural land base.

Decisions to expand settlement areas will permanently alter future land uses in Halton Region. Furthermore, the Region's climate change analysis has demonstrated that expanding communities into new greenfield areas will not help mitigate the climate change emergency, compared to intensifying growth within compact communities, and established built-up areas. Once lands are designated for urban development through a settlement area boundary expansion, that decision is unlikely to be reversed, even if it is later determined that those lands are not required to accommodate growth.

Under the current exercise, the settlement area boundary expansions being proposed in the Draft PGC may not be needed until the end of the planning horizon, if at all.

That said, town staff reiterate support for certain strategic settlement area boundary expansions that may be warranted for the purposes of providing community infrastructure and developing complete communities.

Reducing the Minimum Intensification Target

The Draft PGC proposes a region-wide minimum intensification target of 45% instead of the 50% currently required by the Growth Plan, 2019. To town staff, a lower minimum intensification target (designed to accommodate required population growth) appears incongruous with a settlement area boundary expansion (also designed to accommodate required population growth).

The explanation from Halton Region staff, and its consultant, is that the market driven LNA and the future demand for ground-oriented housing is a contributing factor in lowering the intensification target. Town staff urge caution in this approach, since a forecasted demand may not match actual demand.

As was previously discussed, town staff demonstrated that the LNA under-estimated market demand for apartment housing in Oakville. Could it also be possible that the LNA is over-estimating demand for ground-oriented housing in other parts of the region?

From there, what are the implications for settlement area boundary expansions to accommodate this housing? Town staff remain concerned that the region's IGMS and the development of the PGC may be based on an over-emphasis of market demand at the expense of required policy and principles of good planning.

This would not be the first time a growth forecast fell short of expectations. The region's own analysis through the IGMS showed that settlement areas designated for urban development under the previous two Regional Official Plan Reviews did not develop according to forecasted growth.

Town staff suggest that one way to reduce the amount of potentially unnecessary settlement area boundary expansions as proposed in the Draft PGC would be to revisit the LNA to reduce the supply of new DGA ground-oriented housing.

In the event that the LNA has potentially under-estimated demand for apartment housing and thereby over-estimated demand for ground-oriented housing, as suggested previously in this report, the supply of new DGA ground-oriented housing could be reduced by converting it to apartment housing and transferring it to planned strategic growth areas in the existing DGA and the DBUA.

This would have the effect of improving the region-wide minimum intensification target to meet the provincially mandated minimum, while at the same time strengthening the Regional Urban Structure and reducing pressure for settlement area boundary expansions.

Town staff are of the opinion that this could create a more preferable balance between the policy requirements of the Growth Plan and the market considerations of the LNA. As previously stated, the principles of good planning in the public interest should prevail over market considerations.

Despite these concerns, town staff offers qualified support for reducing the minimum intensification target since the Draft PGC continues to support Oakville's town-wide urban structure by concentrating growth in strategic growth areas in the existing DGA. From this, it is important to note that support for the town's urban structure helps to implement the Regional Urban Structure.

Next Steps in the Regional Official Plan Review

The next steps in the ROPR include bringing a report on a Preferred Growth Concept to Regional Council at its meeting in February 2022 (Appendix B).

The region anticipates that the Preferred Growth Concept and supporting Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) will continue to a Public Open House and Statutory Meeting in March 2022 followed by a recommendation meeting to adopt a ROPA in May 2022. This ROPA is intended to address final matters related to conformity with the Growth Plan.

At that same Regional Council meeting in February, 2022, regional staff will table a Policy Directions Report that will cover many aspects of the Regional Official Plan including agriculture, the Natural Heritage System and climate change. The region anticipates those Policy Directions and the supporting ROPA will continue to a

Public Open House and Statutory Meeting in January 2023 followed by a recommendation meeting to adopt a ROPA March 2023.

Town staff acknowledge that Halton Region is required to demonstrate conformity to the Growth Plan by July 2022, which is influencing the timing of various studies, including the delivery of a Preferred Growth Concept for the IGMS. That said, there remains a significant concern with the sequence of the ROPR work plan and the priority in which matters are being addressed. It appears out of order to be dealing with fundamental policies on agriculture, the Natural Heritage System and climate change after growth management matters, including settlement area boundary expansions have been decided at Regional Council.

The approach taken in Oakville, as shown through the town-wide urban structure, is to protect first, maintain second and provide for development third.

Intensification and Supporting Oakville's Town-Wide Urban Structure

Throughout the IGMS, town staff have consistently expressed support for a Preferred Growth Concept that does not open up new lands for development and that achieves a high rate of intensification within a defined urban structure.

Fundamentally for Oakville, this means strategically directing higher density growth and intensification to the town-wide system of growth nodes and corridors located along high order transit routes. This will help to protect valuable resources, leverage existing infrastructure, and maintain the character of residential neighbourhoods and established areas.

For Oakville, a Preferred Growth Concept that meets these criteria will enable the following:

- Development of compact and complete communities supported by transit to reduce carbon emissions in order to combat the climate change crisis.
- Environmental protection and stewardship of natural heritage as well as protection of prime agricultural lands that support food production networks.
- Better use of transportation infrastructure to alleviate existing traffic congestion and avoid future traffic congestion.
- Development of a built environment that facilitates affordable, healthy and active lifestyles and embraces an aging population.

A Preferred Growth Concept that directs growth to the right place at the right time is a critical input to future planning exercises that include the Best Planning Estimates, Development Charges and various Master Plans. These are the types of more

detailed planning exercises that ensure infrastructure and community facilities are built in order to support future residential and employment growth.

In this report, town staff have expressed concerns with the IGMS process and methods that produced a Draft PGC that proposes to open up new lands for development through settlement area boundary expansions and that also proposes a reduced minimum intensification rate.

When settlement area boundary expansions and a reduced minimum intensification target are considered in the context of the region's key principles for the development of a PGC, perhaps the recommended PGC should direct more growth to existing strategic growth areas to further support the implementation of the Regional Urban Structure and by extension Oakville's town-wide urban structure.

As stated, the region's key principles for the development of a PGC include: meeting the challenge of climate change, maximizing agricultural land protection, setting an ambitious and achievable intensification target, and setting bold yet achievable community area and employment area density targets.

The risks to Oakville of not meeting minimum intensification targets and continuing to grow out include: undermining the town's urban structure, under allocation of financial resources, falling short on building resilient and complete communities, unnecessary and irreversible losses to the agricultural land base and exacerbating the climate emergency.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Draft PGC plans to accommodate future residential and employment growth by implementing the Regional Urban Structure of strategic growth areas and higher order transit corridors. By extension, this helps to support and implement Oakville's town-wide urban structure. Most population, housing and employment growth from 2031 to 2051 will be accommodated within the Region's existing approved settlement areas.

Town staff appreciate the challenge the region faces in developing a PGC that satisfies various aspects of the market while at the same time conforms to the "build up rather than build out" policy requirements of the Growth Plan, 2019.

However, the Draft PGC also proposes a total settlement area boundary expansion of 2,120 hectares onto agricultural land in Milton and Halton Hills. Town staff remain of the opinion that settlement area boundary expansions should be viewed as a last option to be used when opportunities to accommodate growth within the existing settlement areas are exhausted.

This in turn will help Halton Region and the town develop resilient, affordable, transit-supportive and complete communities while protecting rural and agricultural lands, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meeting climate challenges.

While town staff question whether the expansions proposed in the Draft PGC will be needed by the end of the planning horizon, certain strategic expansions could be supported where warranted for the purposes of providing community infrastructure and developing complete communities.

The Draft PGC is also proposing a region-wide minimum intensification target for new residential growth of 45%. This is below the minimum 50% required by the provincial Growth Plan. Town staff offer qualified support since the Draft PGC continues to support Oakville's town-wide urban structure by concentrating growth in strategic growth areas in the existing DGA.

It should be acknowledged though that this represents the planned minimum amount of growth to be accommodated. The level of intensification does not represent a limit to growth, but rather should be viewed as a baseline with the understanding that additional growth is being planned for, and could be achieved.

In the face of uncertain future markets, town staff continue to support a cautious, policy led planning approach to growth management as required by the Growth Plan. This includes avoiding or minimizing settlement area boundary expansions as well as maximizing intensification within the existing urban areas of the town and the region.

Town staff will continue to report to Town Council as necessary on the ROPR and related matters into 2022 and through to the conclusion of the process.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

There are no public considerations and no notice requirements for this report.

(B) FINANCIAL

There are no financial considerations for this report.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Multiple town departments are engaged in the town's responses to Halton's Regional Official Plan Review.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to be the most livable town in Canada.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

Managing and directing required population and employment growth to a defined urban structure is an action to mitigate Climate Change.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Livable Oakville Plan, Schedule A1, Urban Structure

Appendix B – Regional Official Plan Review, Work Plan Timeline

Prepared by:

Kirk Biggar, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner, Policy Planning and Heritage

Geoff Abma, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner, Policy Planning and Heritage

Lara Nelson, MCIP, RPP

Planner, Policy Planning and Heritage

Recommended by:

Lesley E. Gill Woods, MCIP, RPP

Acting Manager, Policy Planning and Heritage

Submitted by:

Gabe Charles, MCIP, RPP

Director, Planning Services