



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR J. LEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: T. WIERZBA, PLANNER
K. SUGGITT, RPP, MANAGER OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, POLICY AND ANALYSIS

NOTED: M. BANFIELD, RPP, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
A. MILLER, RPP, GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT
M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RE: STATUS UPDATE ON THE NEW OFFICIAL PLAN PROJECT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of Council with a status update on the Official Plan project as well as an overview of the potential impacts that the recently approved amendment to the Growth Plan and new Land Needs Assessment Methodology may have on the City's new Official Plan.

Background

By way of Circulation Memo on August 20th Members of Council received a copy of the letter that planning staff submitted through the Environmental Registry of Ontario ('ERO') in response to a proposed amendment to "A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019" (Growth Plan), along with a proposed new Land Needs Assessment Methodology. Both proposals were released by the Province for public review and comment on June 16, 2020 with a comment deadline of July 31, 2020. The Province issued a decision on the proposals on Friday August 28th and the amendment to the Growth Plan is now in effect as well as the new Land Needs Assessment Methodology.

The amendment to the Growth Plan has introduced a new planning horizon to the year 2051 and updated the population and employment forecasts accordingly. By 2051, Barrie's population and employment targets will be 298,000 persons and 150,000 jobs, respectively. The amendment also states that these forecasts are to be treated as minimums and that each municipality must plan for growth accordingly.

In addition to a revised planning horizon and population and employment growth forecasts, the amendment has revised the Land Needs Assessment Methodology. Council will recall that the Methodology is used to determine how much land is required to accommodate the forecasted growth over the planning horizon by considering both intensification and Designated Greenfield Area density targets. During the consultation, the Province did not release a full draft of the methodology for comment. Rather, a summary of changes was provided. That summary indicated that the methodology would be 'outcomes based', leaving room for local municipal characteristics and considerations in planning for growth. Few other details were provided. Staff are currently reviewing the new methodology and the few changes to it that the Province made to address comments received.

Finally, despite the extension of the planning horizon and the shift to a new Land Needs Assessment Methodology, the amendment has not provided any extension to the deadline for municipalities to bring their Official Plans into conformity with the changes. The conformity deadline remains as July 1, 2022.

Throughout the early part of 2020, the Province hosted a series of technical working meetings with stakeholders to discuss the prospect of extending the planning horizon to 2051 for the population and employment forecasts contained in the Growth Plan as well as revising the Land Needs Assessment Methodology. The City of Barrie participated in some of those discussions and had made submissions to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff requesting consideration of transition provisions. The requested transition provisions would allow municipalities, like Barrie, which have completed a significant amount of growth management work as part of their Municipal Comprehensive Reviews for Growth Plan conformity, to continue to use the in-effect 2041 planning horizon and related population and employment targets, rather than conform to a new planning horizon (i.e. 2051) and related growth using an all new methodology. Unfortunately, the Province has not included any transition provisions in the amendment. Staff intend to continue discussion on the matter.

As the amendment is now in effect and all planning decisions are to be in conformity with the Growth Plan, as amended, staff would like to present to Committee the potential impacts of the amendment on the City's Municipal Comprehensive Review currently underway in preparation of our new Official Plan.

Impact of Growth Plan Amendment 1 August 28, 2020

The amendment did not provide for any transition, so, if required to conform to Growth Plan Amendment 1 by July 1, 2022, staff will need to undertake additional conformity work. This will require additional input from the consulting team. Council will recall that Planning Services staff retained Dillon Consulting Ltd. (Dillon) in the summer of 2018 to assist with the preparation of the new Official Plan. Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson), were also part of the consulting team. Watson prepared a Land Needs Assessment Report to determine the City's land need to accommodate the growth forecasted to 2041. Staff reported the results of this report in October 2019 and received direction from Council on a preferred growth management scenario. Most recently, Watson prepared an addendum to the original Land Needs Assessment Report to conform to Council's preferred growth scenario as well as address the impact of employment area land conversions which were recently presented to Council.

More importantly, as of the middle of June, the Dillon consulting team delivered the first full draft of the new Official Plan and City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines for staff to review. Significant resources have been invested in the Official Plan project, particularly regarding growth management and the drafting of the new Official Plan. With the COVID-19 pandemic measures in place, the draft documents were not released for public review at that time.

The impact of a lack of transition language in the Growth Plan, as amended, could necessitate additional work being required by the City to demonstrate conformity meaning the release of the documents for public review would be further delayed. This is because, the Land Needs Assessment Report would have to be revised again to reflect the new Methodology. Further, the text and mapping of the draft new Official Plan would have to be revised to reflect a planning horizon of 2051 – this would likely include a further Settlement Area boundary expansion and potential consideration of a higher intensification target for the 2041-2051 timeframe. All of this would mean additional time and consulting costs, in addition to staff resources.

Proposed Approach

Recognizing the amount of work that has already been completed – (see Appendix 'A' to the ERO letter from the August 20th Circulation Memo for a chronology of growth management and policy work completed to date) – staff are not recommending spending any more resources on additional analysis at this time. The analysis that has been completed to reflect growth to 2041 is sound and has already been provided to Council and to the Province.

To address the matter of conformity with the Growth Plan as amended, the preferred approach is to rely on a future Municipal Comprehensive Review and Official Plan update to assess the 2041-2051 growth. To ensure conformity occurs in a timely manner, staff propose that the text of the draft new Official Plan include language which calls for a conformity exercise to be completed within five years after the new Official Plan is approved.

In the letter submitted to the Province through the ERO consultation staff proposed transition language that would allow the City to conform to the 2041 planning horizon and growth numbers with this new Official Plan. Further, the ERO letter proposed that, as described above, the City commit to undertake an update to the Official Plan for conformity to the 2051 horizon and growth forecasts within five years following approval of the new Official Plan. Staff intend to assertively pursue this approach. Over the required 90-Day review period Staff will continue to consult with the Province on how best to achieve conformity while ensuring the City's strategic interests are met.

Timeline to Release the Draft New Official Plan

The first Draft of the proposed New Official Plan and City-Wide Urban Design Guidelines are ready for release for public review and commenting. This version of the new Official Plan is written to the 2041 horizon and incorporates a population growth of 253,000 and a job forecast of 129,000. Operating as per the approach described above, staff are preparing to release the draft documents on September 24th for the statutory 90-day public comment period in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

A comprehensive engagement plan is in place to collect public and stakeholder feedback. Given the City-wide nature of the new Official Plan, general notification will be provided in the Barrie Advance and will also be sent out to all agencies, public bodies and others as required by the *Planning Act*. The Buildingbarrie.ca website will be updated with the links to the draft documents and directions on how to provide comments during this time. Staff will also be ensuring there is opportunity to meet virtually with planning staff to discuss the draft official plan for clarification and better understanding to assist with the preparation of comments. Staff will also be updating the information on the Buildingbarrie.ca website throughout the 90-day period with information on what we are hearing through the consultation.

Staff will review the comments that are submitted through this comment period and revise the documents as appropriate with a view to bring the documents back before Planning Committee in the spring of 2021 for the statutory Open House and Public Meeting in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

In the meantime, preliminary work will begin on the preparation of the City's new Comprehensive Zoning By-law later this year and into 2021. The zoning by-law project will be a collaborative project with Dillon consulting and City of Barrie staff. In addition, as a special technical advisor working on the process of the new zoning by-law will be Mr. Robert Lehman. As a long time Barrie resident, he is also a member of the College of Fellows with the Canadian Institute of Planners (FCIP). This is the highest recognition the institute can bestow on a planner. He is known as the "Grandfather" of zoning in the industry and we are fortunate to have Mr. Lehman's technical advice on the process to update the zoning by-law. An update on the zoning by-law update process will be provided at a later date.

Any questions or comments can be directed to Kathy Suggitt, Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Policy and Analysis at extension 5268.