

# ***Community Focus Bulletin:*** ***Creating Community Conversations***



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**“Shaping Land Use in The Greater Golden Horseshoe” based on the consultation  
for:**

## **Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review Summary Report on Town Hall Meetings: Our Region, Our Community, Our Home**

The full reports can be accessed using the link below.

[Planning for Health, Prosperity and Growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: 2015 – 2041 \[PDF 25MB\]](#)

*The Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review Summary Report on Town Hall Meetings is available for  
your review*

Four complementary provincial land use plans, known collectively as Ontario’s Greenbelt Plans and the Growth Plan, are currently under review. These four plans provide a comprehensive and integrated planning framework to manage growth, direct infrastructure investments and promote economic prosperity, while protecting and conserving the valuable natural heritage of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region and Greenbelt Plan area. The four plans are

- Niagara Escarpment Plan
- Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- Greenbelt Plan

A coordinated review of the four plans began in February 2015, and the government received extensive feedback. An Advisory Panel chaired by David Crombie completed its work and provided its recommendations in December 2015: Planning for Health, Prosperity and Growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: 2015 – 2041 [PDF 25MB]. The Advisory Panel noted, “There is strong support for these plans” but “there is an urgent need to improve the plans.”

The government is now proposing changes to the four plans based on community consultations.

In addition to seeking feedback on these proposed changes, the province is also undertaking the following actions in response to the Advisory Panel recommendations and what was heard in the consultations of spring 2015:

- Considering possible expansion of the Greenbelt outside of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area where important water resources are under pressure from urban growth
- Obtaining detailed technical information from municipalities, conservation authorities and landowners in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area to determine if further refinements to the Greenbelt are required. This will also help us determine impacts on specific properties.
- Supporting implementation through guidance documents and the mapping of natural

**Proposed directions:**

Building Complete Communities	<p>Recommendations on building complete communities focus on strengthening the plans by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing the density of housing and job opportunities in new development to create well-designed, healthy and transit-supportive communities</li> <li>2. Directing more new development to existing urban areas through intensification, and less to new greenfield areas.</li> <li>3. Establishing stronger criteria to control settlement area expansion</li> <li>4. Encouraging a greater mix of housing types, including affordable housing</li> <li>5. Protecting employment areas and supporting evolving economic activities</li> </ol>
Supporting Agriculture	<p>Recognizing the fundamental importance of agriculture recommendations include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting the identification, mapping and protection of an agricultural system throughout the region</li> <li>2. Implementing stronger criteria to limit the loss and fragmentation of prime agricultural lands, particularly in the outer-ring municipalities beyond the Greenbelt</li> <li>3. Supporting productive agriculture</li> <li>4. Recognizing the importance of locally sourced food and urban agriculture</li> <li>5. Integrating the needs of agriculture throughout the plans, for example when considering settlement area expansion, the rural economy, management of natural resources, infrastructure development, climate change and plan implementation</li> <li>6. Applying an agriculture lens to other provincial policies and programs (such as climate change, transportation and infrastructure, financial tools, community improvement plans and education) to address the unique needs of agriculture in the GGH</li> </ol>

<p>Protecting Natural and Cultural Heritage</p>	<p>Recommendations to improve protection and management of natural and cultural heritage focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Requiring integrated watershed and sub-watershed planning as a prerequisite for settlement area expansion, and major new developments and infrastructure projects</li> <li>2. Improving the mapping, identification, protection and enhancement of natural heritage systems throughout the region</li> <li>3. Growing the Greenbelt by adding areas of critical hydrological significance, such as headwaters of major rivers, moraines, groundwater recharge areas, important surface water features and urban river valleys</li> <li>4. Improving the management of excess soil from development sites</li> <li>5. Developing a long-term strategy for ensuring the wise use, conservation, availability and management of aggregate resources</li> <li>6. Strengthening the protection of cultural heritage</li> </ol>
<p>Providing Infrastructure</p>	<p>Recommendations focus on upgrading existing infrastructure, meeting the demands of growth, increasing resilience to climate change, and keeping the region’s economy strong and globally competitive by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Requiring greater integration of infrastructure planning with land use planning</li> <li>1. Designating and protecting corridors for provincial and municipal infrastructure</li> <li>2. Requiring upper- and single-tier municipalities to undertake climate change vulnerability risk assessments to guide the design of resilient infrastructure</li> <li>3. Providing policy direction to support green infrastructure</li> <li>4. Improving coordination among the Growth Plan, the Province’s Multi-modal Transportation Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and Metrolinx’s regional transportation plan, The Big Move</li> <li>5. Identifying strategic areas within the region’s planned and existing transit network for focused intensification</li> <li>6. Increasing focused investment in transit initiatives to support complete communities</li> <li>7. Increasing efforts on transportation demand management, active transportation and transit integration</li> </ol>
<p>Mainstreaming Climate Change</p>	<p>Recommendations demonstrate how we can mainstream climate change throughout the four plans by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Applying more aggressive intensification and density targets to achieve compact, low-carbon communities</li> <li>2. Improving alignment of transportation planning and investment with growth forecasting and allocation</li> <li>3. Accelerating progress to improve and extend transit and active transportation infrastructure</li> </ol>

	<p>3.Promoting stronger protection and enhancement of natural systems and agricultural lands</p> <p>4.Directing upper- and single-tier municipalities to prepare climate change plans or incorporate policies into official plans to advance climate change mitigation and adaptation goals</p>
<p>Implementing the Plans</p>	<p>Recommendations to improve implementation of the plans include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Addressing designation and boundary concerns associated with the existing plans by applying policy changes recommended in this report related to such matters as: settlement area expansion; complete communities; strategic employment lands; infrastructure and servicing; agricultural viability; protection of farmland; natural heritage systems; water resources; climate change; and enhancing plan implementation</li> <li>2.Increasing efficiency and reducing duplication of approval processes for the Niagara Escarpment Plan area</li> <li>3.Streamlining the policy framework, terminology and timelines of the four plans</li> <li>4. Extending the timeframe for municipalities to conform with Growth Plan Amendment 2 to 2021</li> <li>5.Developing a comprehensive monitoring program</li> <li>6. Ensuring there is a secretariat within the provincial government with the capacity and resources to ensure effective coordination of actions by provincial ministries, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, municipalities, conservation authorities, and other local bodies that will facilitate implementation of the four plans and address the recommendations in this report</li> <li>7.Creating an oversight forum to monitor and report on implementation and deliver public education about the four plans</li> </ol>

## **Consistent messages from the consultation in 2015 to consider when reviewing “Shaping Land Use in The Greater Golden Horseshoe”:**

The purpose of the consultation in 2015 was to obtain feedback on the six goals of the Co-ordinated Review to inform the development of proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Plans and the Growth Plan. Here are some of the findings/suggested directions.

### **Protecting agricultural land, water and natural areas Protecting and Expanding the Greenbelt**

Consistent messages:

- protect and expand the Greenbelt and support of growing the Greenbelt to enhance the protection of sensitive ecological and hydrological features and functions, conserve valuable farmland and prevent leap frog development.
- protect agricultural land and support farmers and strong support to permanently protecting farmland from conversion to other land use designations, particularly classes 1-4 in the Canada Land Inventory as well as specialty crop areas (e.g., fruit land).
- develop policies to support farming as a viable livelihood and ensure protected farmland remains productive.
- the most frequently cited suggestions were:
  - Relax existing policies or restrictions to increase the range of permitted uses on agricultural land such as secondary units and value-added operations (e.g., processing, agri-tourism).
  - support small-scale agriculture and sustain farming in general and as a viable business within the Greenbelt (e.g., financial incentives or subsidies for new or retiring farmers).
  - Compensate farmers for the ecological goods and services they provide through contemporary farming practices or stewardship activities and the impact of the Greenbelt policies on their land
  - Establish a clear and long-term agricultural plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe so farmers can plan into the future for successive generations.
  - Enhance on-farm infrastructure and servicing to support value-added operations (e.g., natural gas, upgraded electrical and water infrastructure).

### **Protecting natural areas and features**

Consistent messages:

- strengthen existing policies to protect the region’s natural areas and the features within them.
- prioritize the protection of ecological and hydrological features that are linked to air and water quality through a systems approach to enhance local resiliency to climate change.

## **Directing urban development**

### **Consistent messages:**

- support policies to manage growth and direct development by maintaining existing urban boundaries.
- “freezing” existing urban boundaries limits development from encroaching on greenfield sites, urban sprawl and leap-frog development.
- urban revitalization, efficient use of infrastructure, intensification, access to employment areas and transit--supportive development promoting development within established urban boundaries.
- promote the redevelopment of brownfield properties **Keeping people and goods moving, and building cost-effective infrastructure**

### **Consistent messages:**

- support public transit
- develop public transit as a cost-effective approach to help fulfill the objectives of the Growth and Greenbelt Plans, while enhancing intraregional and local connectivity.
- Provide tools to help municipalities, particularly smaller and/or rural municipalities, finance and maintain public transit infrastructure (e.g., mechanisms such as road tolls, gas tax revenues, development charges revenues, dedicated provincial funding, government or public-private partnerships)

## **Fostering healthy, livable and inclusive communities**

### **Consistent messages:**

- integrate services and amenities that enable Ontarians to meet their daily needs efficiently and cost-effectively,
- strengthen policies to guide the development of compact and complete communities.
- promote higher density and mixed-use development to maximize investments in infrastructure (particularly public transit),
- attract and decentralize jobs,
- promote active transportation,
- walkability and reducing commute times,
- develop a range of housing options (especially affordable housing)
- protect natural heritage and community greenspaces from development.
- ensure diverse and affordable housing options to support the development of mixed-use, walkable and transit-oriented complete communities

## **Building communities that attract workers and create jobs while fostering vibrant rural economies**

### **Consistent messages:**

- develop smart growth principles of the Growth and Greenbelt Plans that guide the development of complete communities also attract workers and create jobs. (Support for strengthening policies that encourage intensification, transit-oriented development, vibrant public spaces as well as diverse recreational opportunities) but emphasis on the need for new policies or mechanisms to foster rural economic development.
- support opportunities and needs of rural communities are different from urban ones and require specific policy direction.
- Develop policies to protect natural heritage and agricultural land preclude development within these areas, limiting opportunities to diversify rural economies, create new jobs or attract new employees.
- create provincial policies and programs to help create more local, year-round employment opportunities in rural communities (i.e. reducing development charges and servicing costs for employment areas, enhancing servicing and communications infrastructure to lower business costs (e.g., high-speed internet) as well as promoting tourism (e.g., eco-tourism and cultural tourism) and greenbelt commodities).

## **Addressing climate change and building resilient communities**

### **Consistent messages:**

- integrate climate change into the plans
- integrate different policy areas in the Growth and Greenbelt Plans as a means to address climate change.
- enhance existing policies about water resources, natural areas and farmland conservation to simultaneously address climate related changes, or make the connection between them more explicit (e.g., planting buffers to protect river banks etc.)
- recognition of the impact of ecosystem services, particularly on agricultural lands, toward climate change mitigation and adaptation goals (e.g., carbon sequestration, groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat, etc.)
- integrate land use and transportation planning to promote transit-oriented development to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- integrate green infrastructure and low-impact development (LID) strategies and materials in construction and development projects to support the development of resilient communities (e.g., managing stormwater on site to prevent flooding).

## **Improving implementation and better aligning the plans**

### **Consistent messages:**

- align the four plans was brought forward at every town hall meeting.
- consolidate the plans into one set of policies using the highest level of protection or at least amalgamating the three Greenbelt Plans.

- maintaining each plan and harmonizing them using the terminology of the Provincial Policy Statement to improve their interpretation and implementation.

#### **Local questions to consider when reviewing the report?**

1. How will the results of this provincial review be used by the City and County in the upcoming official plan reviews?
2. Will the concepts of the four plans be extended by the local planning authorities to areas not covered by these plans? If so, how will this be accomplished?
3. As Sustainable Peterborough leads a comprehensive review of local climate change, how will the results of the provincial consultation be helpful and/or be used (i.e. water resources, conservation of land as well as conservation easements, carbon sequestration)?
4. The Future of Food & Farming Working Group of Sustainable Peterborough has undertaken a review of the changes in farmland used for food production. How can other communities undertake similar reviews in order to ensure we do not continue to lose food producing land?
5. How will these directions for planning of our communities and neighbourhoods be supported by federal policy initiatives?
6. Hubs: Will Provincial policies provide financial support and incentives to implement local provision of services to support the Provincial Directions ?

For more information about our upcoming Community Focus Bulletins go to

<http://www.merriam-associates.com/contact-us>

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