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Seeking Feedback

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs is seeking feedback on this draft guidance document. The deadline for providing feedback is June 19, 2018.

Comments may be submitted in one of the following ways:

1. Online:

2. By mail:
   Ontario Growth Secretariat
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   Ministry of Municipal Affairs
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   Toronto ON M5G 2E5

3. By email: placestogrow@ontario.ca
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Introduction

1.1 The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017

On July 1, 2017, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2017 (the “Growth Plan, 2017” or the “Growth Plan”) came into effect. The Growth Plan, 2017 was prepared under the Places to Grow Act, 2005, which requires that plans be reviewed at least every ten years. It replaces the previous version of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe originally introduced by the Province in June 2006 (the “2006 Growth Plan”) as part of the Places to Grow initiative. Places to Grow is the Ontario government’s initiative to plan for growth and development in a way that supports economic prosperity, protects the environment, and helps communities achieve a high quality of life.

The Growth Plan, 2017 applies to all land use planning decisions made on or after July 1, 2017, subject to limited exceptions specified in the Growth Plan transition regulation (O. Reg. 311/06). The Growth Plan, 2017 responds to key challenges the Greater Golden Horseshoe (“GGH”) continues to face with enhanced policy directions that build on the 2006 Growth Plan.

The policies of the Growth Plan create a framework for managing the population and employment growth forecasted in the GGH. The Growth Plan aims to:

- Support the achievement of complete communities that offer more options for living, working, learning, shopping, and playing.
- Prioritize intensification and higher densities to make efficient use of land and infrastructure.
- Reduce traffic gridlock by improving access to a greater range of transportation options and support transit viability.
- Provide housing options to meet the needs of people at any age.
- Revitalize downtowns to become more vibrant and to provide convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, public service facilities, and a full range of housing.
- Curb sprawl and protect farmland, natural heritage and water resources, and cultural heritage resources.
- Promote long-term economic growth.
- Integrate land use and infrastructure planning to ensure effective and efficient use of investments.
• Integrate climate change considerations into planning and managing growth to move towards low-carbon communities.

1.2 Purpose of this Guidance Document

This draft guidance document has been prepared by the Province to assist municipal planning practitioners, municipal councils, and other decision-makers with implementing, and members of the public, stakeholders, and First Nations and Métis communities with better understanding, the policies of the Growth Plan, 2017.

The purpose of this draft guidance document is to support the implementation of the municipal comprehensive review (MCR) process as required by the policies of the Growth Plan, 2017. Any information, technical criteria, and approaches in this draft guidance document are meant to support, but not add to or detract from the Growth Plan policies as they exist.

The policies of the Growth Plan, 2017 work together to create a planning framework that, if implemented in its entirety, will achieve the objectives of the Growth Plan. Interpretation of individual policies needs to be done within the broader context of the Growth Plan, 2017. The Growth Plan needs to be read in its entirety and applied comprehensively. The language of each policy has been deliberately crafted in a way to assist decision-makers in understanding how the policies are to be implemented as a whole.

This draft guidance document must be read alongside the policies of the Growth Plan, as well as supplementary direction that has been issued by the Minister of Municipal Affairs or by other Ministers of the Crown, where appropriate, to ensure conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017.

This draft guidance document is intended for municipalities within the GGH. For information on the comprehensive review that is applicable for Ontario municipalities outside the GGH in accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement, refer to the separate InfoSheet on that topic.
1.3  Defined Terms and Meanings

Where a word is italicized in this draft guidance document, the definition of the word or phrase is to be understood as reflecting the corresponding definitions in Section 7 – Definitions of the Growth Plan, 2017. For non-italicized terms, the normal meaning of the word applies. Where a word or phrase is typically used in a planning context, the meaning associated with the use of that word or phrase within the planning context is intended to apply.

Any references to specific “policies,” “subsections,” or “schedules” in this draft guidance document are references to the corresponding policies, subsections or schedules in the Growth Plan, 2017, unless otherwise specified.

1.4  Acronyms

The following acronyms are used throughout this draft guidance document:

- $DGA$ – designated greenfield area
- $GGH$ – Greater Golden Horseshoe
- $MCR$ – municipal comprehensive review
- $MTSA$ – major transit station area
- $PPS$ – Provincial Policy Statement
- $SGA$ – strategic growth area
- $UGC$ – urban growth centre
What is a Municipal Comprehensive Review?

The Planning Act and Places to Grow Act, 2005 require that municipalities implement the Growth Plan by bringing official plans into conformity with provincial policies within specified timeframes. Many of the new policies in the Growth Plan, 2017 (e.g., climate change, complete streets) can be implemented by municipalities through official plan amendments at any time independent of other policy requirements. However, while municipalities may bring their official plans into conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017 through a series of amendments, the policies that require implementation through a municipal comprehensive review (MCR) cannot be implemented independently. This means that they can only be implemented through a new official plan or an official plan amendment that completes the comprehensive application of the policies in the Growth Plan, 2017. Other new policies that do not specify implementation through an MCR can be applied in advance of the MCR (through an official plan amendment), otherwise they must be applied as part of it.

The MCR is defined in the Growth Plan, 2017 as:

“A new official plan, or an official plan amendment, initiated by an upper- or single-tier municipality under section 26 of the Planning Act that comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of this Plan.”

2.1 The Municipal Comprehensive Review Process

The MCR is defined as a particular type of planning instrument that will involve a process through which municipalities undertake the background research, public consultation, and policy formulation necessary to bring upper- and single-tier official plans into full conformity with the policies in the Growth Plan, 2017. As noted above, certain key policies must be implemented in an integrated manner through the same official plan or official plan amendment (i.e., policies regarding growth management that cannot be implemented independently). This core principle of integrated growth management has been reinforced in the Growth Plan, 2017 through an increased number of policies that explicitly specify that they can only be implemented through a MCR.

Much of the background work throughout the MCR process will be iterative. Municipalities should carefully consider all related guidance and supplementary
direction throughout each stage of the process (e.g., the establishment of the urban structure should include analysis of the Agricultural System and an understanding of how to undertake an agricultural impact assessment).

Municipalities should consult with staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (as well as other Ministries as appropriate) throughout the MCR process to ensure the process is undertaken efficiently and effectively. As described in this draft guidance document, certain decisions should be made at various points in the process to inform next steps (e.g., requests for the Minister to permit an alternative target should occur prior to undertaking the land needs assessment). Section 4 of this draft guidance document provides further information on recommended checkpoints.

Involving Indigenous communities early in the planning process to understand and be responsive to Aboriginal and treaty rights or interests is also considered an important element of the MCR process.

2.2 Implementation of the Municipal Comprehensive Review

The MCR process will lead to the revision of an official plan in accordance with section 26 of the Planning Act, which will require Provincial approval. By definition, the MCR requires the comprehensive application of the policies in the Growth Plan, 2017. This means that upon completion of the MCR process, the official plan (once approved and in effect) will be entirely in conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017.

The final approval by the Province of an official plan or official plan amendment under section 26 of the Planning Act will need to fully satisfy the test of conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017 (i.e., comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of the Growth Plan, 2017). No elements of conformity that are specified in policy as being addressed through upper- or single-tier official plan policies or mapping can be deferred to be implemented at a later time either through exclusion, or through policies that dictate future studies to be completed. Furthermore, no elements of conformity that are specified in policy as being addressed through upper- or single-tier official plan policies or mapping can be deferred to lower-tier official plans.

Upper- and single-tier official plans or official plan amendments adopted in accordance with section 26 of the Planning Act require Provincial approval. Provincial decisions on these matters will be non-appealable once the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017 takes effect.
The Growth Plan, 2017 provides that only upper- and single-tier municipalities can undertake a MCR. This is a change from the 2006 Growth Plan, where a MCR could also be undertaken by lower-tier municipalities. This change means that the Province will be the approval authority for key elements of the implementation of the Growth Plan, 2017 and reinforces the important coordination role played by upper-tier municipalities in growth management, in particular across municipal boundaries.

### 2.3 Role of Lower-tier Municipalities

The Growth Plan, 2017 provides a policy framework, and the MCR process integrates this framework into an upper- or single-tier official plan or official plan amendment that provides policy direction for how growth will occur across the upper- or single-tier municipality. Lower-tier municipalities are then responsible for further implementing the results of the upper-tier process by updating their official plans to conform with the upper-tier official plan and the Growth Plan.

Even though a MCR is implemented through an upper- or single-tier official plan or official plan amendment, lower-tier municipalities are key partners and should be consulted extensively by upper-tier municipalities throughout the MCR process.

For example, an upper-tier municipality could request analysis and/or mapping to be undertaken by lower-tier municipalities to contribute towards the objective of completing a timely MCR that satisfies the requirements of the Growth Plan, 2017. This coordination will help inform upper-tier implementation of the Growth Plan, 2017, as well as subsequent implementation by lower-tier municipalities.

### 2.4 Transition for Matters in Process

As stated in section 2.2 of this draft guidance document, completion of the MCR process will result in an official plan (once approved and in effect) that is entirely in conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017. In the interim, the Planning Act requires that all decisions in respect of planning matters will conform with the Growth Plan as of July 1, 2017, subject to any legislative or regulatory provisions providing otherwise. Some Growth Plan policies specify that they do not apply to decisions in respect of planning matters until the MCR is approved and in effect. The Growth Plan transition regulation (O. Reg. 311/06) allows for certain matters commenced before June 16, 2006 that were not subject to the 2006 Growth Plan to proceed without the requirement to conform with the Growth Plan, 2017.

Appendix 1 of this draft guidance document provides a summary of the provisions in the Growth Plan transition regulation, as well as a summary of how the Growth Plan,
2017 applies to decisions on matters in process until the applicable upper- or single-tier municipality has completed its next *MCR*.

Further, as decisions are being made on other planning matters (e.g., secondary plans, zoning by-laws) in advance of completion of the *MCR*, Appendix 2 of this draft guidance document provides examples of policies in the updated Growth Plan, 2017 (that do not specify implementation through *MCR*) that may be relevant. Efforts to address Growth Plan, 2017 policies that are not expressly linked to a *MCR* can occur as part of the regular process of review and approving *development* applications and should not unduly delay that process.

### 2.5 Background Studies

A number of policies in the Growth Plan, 2017 require completion of specific types of technical background work including master plans, assessments, various studies or other research, and preparation of associated documentation (“studies”). These studies are integral to the *MCR* process and help inform policy development based on local conditions (e.g., consideration of alternative targets or the need for a *settlement area* boundary expansion).

It is important in undertaking such studies that the municipality follow the policy direction provided in the Growth Plan, 2017. The land needs assessment in particular must be undertaken in accordance with the methodology for assessing land needs established by the Province, which will be issued as supplementary direction. Where the Growth Plan, 2017 explicitly provides for an “equivalent” study (e.g., “water and wastewater master plan or equivalent”), work completed by the municipality that meets or exceeds the objectives outlined in the Growth Plan, 2017 will be considered to have met the policy requirements and can be used to inform the *MCR* process.

There may be circumstances where existing studies need to be supplemented through further work by municipalities in order for decisions arising from these studies to conform with the Growth Plan, 2017.

Multiple study requirements can potentially be satisfied through a single study, provided the study requirements of each component as provided for in the Growth Plan, 2017 are appropriately addressed. For example, some municipalities may choose to combine water, wastewater, and *stormwater master plans*, since all must be informed by *watershed planning*. Municipalities should consult with Provincial staff at any point in the *MCR* process if questions arise as to what constitutes an acceptable study.
Within the GGH, a MCR process undertaken in accordance with the Growth Plan, 2017 is deemed to have fulfilled the comprehensive review requirements in the PPS, 2014. The MCR process only applies to municipalities within the GGH, where the Growth Plan, 2017 applies. Outside of the GGH, the comprehensive review process as provided for in the PPS, 2014 continues to apply.

In submitting a MCR to the Province for approval, it is the responsibility of the upper- or single-tier municipality to ensure that all of the necessary background studies have been completed. To support the Minister in making a decision on the matter, all background studies should be submitted to the Province along with the official plan or official plan amendment.

### 2.6 Sequencing of Analysis Related to Land Needs Assessment

The Growth Plan, 2017 is not prescriptive in the sequencing and timing of the analysis and policy development required to achieve conformity. Each municipality exists within a unique planning context and variations on the process presented in this draft guidance document may be appropriate in undertaking a MCR. It is up to municipalities to determine how best to sequence MCR related activities within the context of local governance, staff resources, fiscal priorities, existing studies, and other applicable factors, while ensuring the work completed addresses all of the requirements of the Growth Plan, 2017. However, there are certain components that must be completed in advance of land needs assessment, and others that cannot be undertaken until later in the process following land needs assessment (refer to section 3.5 of this draft guidance document for more information on the land needs assessment).

Prior to carrying out the land needs assessment, municipalities are required to undertake analysis to support establishment of an appropriate intensification target (based on, at a minimum, potential capacity of UGCs, MTSAs, and other SGAs) and density targets (including DGA and employment areas, etc.) at the upper- or single-tier scale. These targets must meet or exceed the minimum targets established in the Growth Plan. Where the policies provide that alternative targets may be permitted, this analysis would provide the basis for the Minister’s consideration of any municipal requests for alternative targets (refer to “Draft Technical Guidance on the Intensification and Density Targets” for more information on requesting alternative targets).
What is a Municipal Comprehensive Review?

Municipalities should also undertake analysis to establish the preliminary urban structure (or “a hierarchy of settlement areas and of areas within settlement areas”) to provide a framework for integrated decision-making throughout the MCR process (refer to section 3.1 of this draft guidance document for description of related analysis). Aspects of the MCR process that can only be determined after undertaking the land needs assessment include, for example:

- Whether any employment area conversions may be considered;
- Whether any settlement area boundary expansions are needed (or identification of any excess lands); and
- Upper-tier direction to lower-tier municipalities on key elements of implementing the Growth Plan, including identifying minimum targets, allocating forecasted growth and addressing matters that cross municipal boundaries.

Municipalities should consult with Provincial staff throughout the MCR process particularly at key decision points (e.g., when undertaking delineation of MTSAs, setting employment area density targets and the land needs assessment). This would enable the municipality to proceed to the next stage of the MCR process with further certainty and clarity, particularly when the Province is reviewing an upper- or single-tier official plan or official plan amendment for conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017.
3  Policies that Specify Implementation through a Municipal Comprehensive Review

The purpose of the MCR process is to bring upper- and single-tier official plans into full conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017. This section of this draft guidance document provides more detailed information about the key policies in the Growth Plan, 2017 that specify implementation through a MCR.

3.1  Establish an “Urban Structure”

The Growth Plan, 2017 provides policy direction to ensure that growth occurs in a socially, fiscally, and environmentally sustainable manner. It emphasizes the need to concentrate growth within settlement areas or areas within settlement areas (e.g., SGAs) where growth can help:

- Support new or improved transit services;
- Improve access to public services;
- Support a diverse range and mix of housing options;
- Optimize utilization of existing infrastructure; and
- Support the achievement of complete communities.

In particular, the major cities in the region (i.e., those that have UGCs) contain large downtown areas or other centres for growth that have been planned to accommodate significant growth at higher densities. Most of these cities have existing or planned higher order transit and will continue to function as regional gateways where a significant amount of growth will continue to be attracted over the long-term.

Not all lands currently designated for urban development are equally able to accommodate forecasted growth in a manner that accords with policy 2.2.1.3. Nor are all settlement areas appropriate locations for settlement area boundary expansions to accommodate forecasted growth.

For example, some areas within settlement areas (e.g., floodplains) may be restricted for future development for public health and safety reasons, or development may only be permitted subject to certain conditions (i.e., Special Policy Areas). Many settlement areas have infrastructure constraints (e.g., water and wastewater servicing) that would need to be considered and addressed to ensure they do not limit the capacity to accommodate growth. Additionally, some settlement areas may be located near
deposits of *mineral aggregate resources* (see the PPS, 2014 for further direction on where development is permitted). Other *settlement areas* are located in or close to areas of environmental and/or agricultural significance (e.g., *natural heritage features and areas*, *prime agricultural lands*, and/or *significant groundwater recharge areas*) that need to be considered when planning for additional growth. One of the key objectives of the Greenbelt Plan is to protect the rural character of the Protected Countryside of the *Greenbelt Area*, so growth will continue to be limited in those *settlement areas* and any proposed boundary expansions for Towns/Villages will be subject to certain size restrictions and other additional criteria (refer to section 3.5.2 of this draft guidance document).

Upper- and single-tier municipalities should begin the *MCR* process by establishing a preliminary urban structure to prioritize where forecasted growth will be directed, in accordance with policy 2.2.1.3 a). This urban structure will form the basis for other analysis required to bring official plans into conformity with the Growth Plan, 2017.

The key policy consideration for establishing the urban structure is policy 2.2.1.2, which states:

“Forecasted growth to the horizon of this Plan will be allocated based on the following:

a) the vast majority of growth will be directed to *settlement areas* that:
   i. have a *delineated built boundary*;
   ii. have existing or planned *municipal water and wastewater systems*; and
   iii. can support the achievement of *complete communities*;

b) growth will be limited in *settlement areas* that:
   i. are *undelineated built-up areas*;
   ii. are not serviced by existing or planned *municipal water and wastewater systems*; or
   iii. are in the *Greenbelt Area*;
c) within settlement areas, growth will be focused in:
   
i. delineated built-up areas;

ii. strategic growth areas;

iii. locations with existing or planned transit, with a priority on higher order transit where it exists or is planned; and

iv. areas with existing or planned public service facilities;

d) development will be directed to settlement areas, except where the policies of this Plan permit otherwise;

e) development will be generally directed away from hazardous lands; and

f) the establishment of new settlement areas is prohibited."

While the establishment of an urban structure should be one of the first steps in the MCR process, determination of the final hierarchy of settlement areas and of areas within settlement areas where growth is to be focused may be an iterative process as additional analysis is undertaken.

As part of the analysis to support determination of the urban structure, the requirements in policy 2.2.8.3 should be considered for determining location and assessing feasibility of any proposed settlement area boundary expansions early in the MCR process. For example, municipalities should consider whether growth of certain settlement areas would be limited due to the location of water resource systems, the Natural Heritage System, and/or the Agricultural System. This will involve analysis of the Natural Heritage System and the Agricultural System mapping and other supplementary direction that has been issued by the Province. Municipalities should also consider where expansions could make optimal use of existing infrastructure.

Early work on determining the preliminary urban structure will help ensure objectivity throughout the process of determining which settlement areas could be expanded, if the need for a boundary expansion has been demonstrated through the land needs assessment.

Further, by establishing a clear hierarchy of areas within settlement areas (as part of the MCR process) that identifies areas where intensification will be focused and areas where there is a desire to conserve the existing built form (e.g., cultural heritage resources), municipalities can ensure that the desired urban form is achieved while providing greater certainty and clarity for all parties.
3.2 **Undertake Integrated Planning for Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities**

The Growth Plan, 2017 requires that *infrastructure* be planned in a manner that is integrated with the planning process for managing growth. This includes ensuring sufficient *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* capacity is available or planned in appropriate locations (e.g., SGAs) to accommodate forecasted growth.

The urban structure (or “hierarchy of settlement areas and areas within settlement areas”) will provide direction on where planning for growth needs to be focused, and where *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* should be available. Municipalities should use any appropriate analysis arising from the establishment of the preliminary urban structure as inputs into all related *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* planning exercises, and vice versa.

3.3 **Delineate Areas to Which Targets Apply**

To support clarity and consistency in the implementation of the minimum intensification and density targets set out in the Growth Plan, 2017 (or alternative targets, where permitted by the Minister), the Growth Plan specifically requires upper- and single-tier municipalities to delineate the following areas in official plans through the *MCR* process. For more information on how to delineate and apply the targets of the Growth Plan, refer to “Draft Technical Guidance on the Application of the Intensification and Density Targets.”

3.3.1 **The Delineated Built-up Area**

The Growth Plan, 2017 defines the *delineated built-up area* as:

“All land within the *delineated built boundary*.”

The *delineated built boundary* is defined as:

“The limits of the developed urban area as defined by the Minister in consultation with affected municipalities for the purpose of measuring the minimum intensification target in this Plan.”
The delineated built boundary identifies the delineated built-up area as of June 16, 2006. The delineated built boundary was incorporated into all upper- and single tier official plans through the conformity review process associated with the 2006 Growth Plan. The delineated built boundary has not changed since that time.

3.3.2 Urban Growth Centres

The Growth Plan, 2017 defines UGCs as:

“Existing or emerging downtown areas shown in Schedule 4 and as further identified by the Minister on April 2, 2008.”

UGCs were delineated in all upper- and single-tier official plans based on the UGC boundaries established through the technical paper, “Size and Location of Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2008” associated with the 2006 Growth Plan. There are no new UGCs identified in the Growth Plan, 2017.

Only upper- or single-tier municipalities may make changes to UGC boundaries, which can only take place as part of a MCR in accordance with the above mentioned technical paper.

3.3.3 Major Transit Station Areas

Delineation of MTSAs will be based on the definition of MTSAs in the Growth Plan, 2017 and related policies, in particular policy 2.2.4.2. The Growth Plan, 2017 defines MTSAs as:

“The area including and around any existing or planned higher order transit station or stop within a settlement area; or the area including and around a major bus depot in an urban core. Major transit station areas generally are defined as the area within an approximate 500 metre radius of a transit station, representing about a 10-minute walk.”

Delineation of MTSAs in upper- and single-tier official plans is only required for MTSAs that are subject to policy 2.2.4.3 (i.e., those located along priority transit corridors or subway lines). While these are the only areas subject to the MTSA density targets provided in the Growth Plan, 2017, the delineation of other areas meeting the definition of MTSAs and the establishment of associated density targets in accordance with the Ministry of Transportation’s Transit-Supportive Guidelines is encouraged.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities should determine approximate MTSA delineations early in the MCR process in order to assess the potential to achieve transit-supportive growth (e.g., in order to determine an appropriate intensification
target and/or request alternative targets). However, these delineations will not be finalized until later in the MCR process as part of the official plan approval.

### 3.3.4 Other Strategic Growth Areas

The Growth Plan, 2017 defines SGAs as:

> “Within settlement areas, nodes, corridors, and other areas that have been identified by municipalities or the Province to be the focus for accommodating intensification and higher-density mixed uses in a more compact built form. Strategic growth areas include urban growth centres, major transit station areas, and other major opportunities that may include infill, redevelopment, brownfield sites, the expansion or conversion of existing buildings, or greyfields. Lands along major roads, arterials, or other areas with existing or planned frequent transit service or higher order transit corridors may also be identified as strategic growth areas.”

The Growth Plan, 2017 establishes targets for certain SGAs, including UGCs and some MTSA, but municipalities are also encouraged to go beyond this minimum requirement to identify other SGAs (e.g., nodes or areas along corridors intended for intensification) and set appropriate density targets to guide development within these areas. This is particularly important in municipalities that do not have UGCs or MTSA as areas in which to focus growth. SGAs may include intensification corridors and intensification areas that have previously been identified in existing official plans.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities are responsible for determining the density targets for any other SGAs identified through the intensification strategy process as provided for in policy 2.2.2.4 c). Additional SGAs may be identified in the DGA through the DGA density analysis being undertaken as part of the efforts to increase the planned densities within the existing DGA. Like SGAs identified through the intensification strategy for the delineated built-up area, establishment of the density targets applicable to SGAs located within the DGA is the responsibility of upper- and single-tier municipalities.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities should determine approximate SGA delineations early in the MCR process in order to assess growth potential (e.g., in order to determine an appropriate intensification target and/or request alternative targets). However, these delineations will not be finalized until later in the MCR process as part of the official plan approval.
3.3.5 Portions of the Designated Greenfield Area

For the purpose of this draft guidance document, the term “existing DGA” applies to lands within settlement areas as they were identified in official plans on July 1, 2017 (not including lands within delineated built-up areas). This includes all lands within undelineated built-up areas. It also includes lands that are subject to section 3(7) of O. Reg. 311/06 (which will technically be identified in parts of official plans that come into effect after that date).

The term “new DGA” applies to any lands added to settlement areas through expansions approved and coming into effect after July 1, 2017 (except those subject to section 3(7) of O. Reg. 311/06), or through the future release of excess lands for development purposes as part of a subsequent MCR process.

Policy 5.2.5.3 e) requires upper- and single-tier municipalities to delineate “each portion of the designated greenfield area that is subject to a specific density target” as part of the MCR process. This is particularly relevant to inner ring municipalities, where there are different DGA density targets for the existing and new DGA. The delineation of the existing DGA in inner ring municipalities is required to differentiate the lands subject to the minimum density of 60 residents and jobs per hectare (or alternative target) from any new DGA added through expansions to settlement areas approved after July 1, 2017, which are subject to a minimum density of 80 residents and jobs per hectare. The delineation of new DGA can only be finalized after the land needs assessment has been undertaken, and, if needed, the locations of any settlement area boundary expansions have been established.

3.4 Establish Targets

Intensification and density targets (DGA, employment areas, UGCs, MTSAs, and other SGAs) are to be incorporated into upper- and single-tier official plans through the MCR process. The intensification and density targets established by the Growth Plan, 2017 represent minimum standards that need to be met to conform with the Growth Plan. Municipalities are encouraged to go beyond these minimum targets where possible, except where doing so would conflict with any policy of the Growth Plan, 2017, the PPS or other provincial plans.

In advance of undertaking a land needs assessment based on the minimum intensification targets in the Growth Plan, 2017, municipalities should assess how much population and employment growth can be accommodated in SGAs, including UGCs and MTSAs based on the density targets that the Growth Plan requires. In some cases, this assessment may indicate that an intensification target that is higher than
the minimum target in the Growth Plan, 2017 is possible and may be appropriate. In such cases, municipalities may use this higher target as an input into their land needs assessment. In making this assessment, there may be some flexibility regarding the assumed timing for full build-out (i.e., achievement of planned density), where appropriate. Prior to undertaking the land needs assessment, municipalities should work with Provincial staff to determine an appropriate intensification target.

The Growth Plan, 2017 also establishes minimum density targets for the DGA and requires that lands within those areas be planned to achieve the prescribed densities by the horizon of the Growth Plan. Like the intensification target, the minimum density target for the DGA is a minimum standard and municipalities should look for opportunities to go beyond the minimum target, where appropriate. Where there are MTSAs on priority transit corridors (which are subject to minimum density targets in accordance with Growth Plan policy) located in the DGA, the associated forecasted growth in the MTSA to the Growth Plan horizon should be factored into determination of an appropriate overall density target that will be achieved within that same horizon.

To reflect the diversity of communities within the GGH, the Growth Plan, 2017 provides certain opportunities for municipalities to request and demonstrate the appropriateness of alternatives to the intensification target, the DGA density target, and MTSA density targets. Requests for alternative targets must be made by an upper- or single-tier municipal council as part of the MCR process. An alternative target will only be considered where it can be justified in accordance with the applicable criteria outlined in the Growth Plan, 2017. Municipalities may make a recommendation for a specific alternative target based on their analysis and data and that recommendation will be considered.

Municipalities should obtain written permission from the Minister prior to an alternative target being applied as an input into land needs assessment. This would enable the municipality to proceed to the next stage of the MCR process with further certainty and clarity, particularly when the Province is reviewing an upper- or single-tier official plan or official plan amendment.

In two-tier municipalities, upper-tier municipalities are responsible for identifying targets for lower-tier municipalities and targets may differ among lower-tier municipalities, provided the overall target is planned to be achieved across the upper-tier level. However, the final establishment of appropriate targets for lower-tier municipalities should not take place until later in the MCR process, once the land needs assessment is complete and the location of settlement area boundary expansions has been determined based on appropriate studies and analysis.
For more information about the implementation of each type of target, including analysis required to support requests for alternative targets, refer to “Draft Technical Guidance on the Application of the Intensification and Density Targets.”

3.5 Assess Land Needs

As set out in this draft guidance document, the “Draft Technical Guidance on the Application of the Intensification and Density Targets,” and the “Proposed Methodology for Land Needs Assessment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe,” municipalities must undertake certain analyses in advance of completing a land needs assessment (refer to section 2.6 of this draft guidance document). Key inputs to the land needs assessment include the population and employment forecasts in Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan, the minimum intensification and DGA density targets, as well as an employment area density target. For more information on the determination of these inputs refer to “Draft Technical Guidance on the Application of the Intensification and Density Targets.”

Upper- and single-tier municipalities will use the Provincial methodology for land needs assessment in the GGH issued by the Minister under policy 2.2.1.5 to determine the amount of land required to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth to the horizon of the Growth Plan, 2017. The results of a completed land needs assessment will be used by upper- and single-tier municipalities to determine whether settlement area boundary expansions are required to accommodate forecasted growth. In some cases in the outer ring, the land needs assessment will determine that a municipality has excess lands. The land needs assessment will also inform part of the analysis to determine whether any lands within designated employment areas can be considered for conversion to non-employment uses (i.e., confirmation that the municipality will maintain sufficient employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth to 2041).

The key outputs of a land needs assessment will be a total quantum (either shortage or surplus) of community area land need across the upper- or single-tier municipality and a separate total quantum (either shortage or surplus) of employment area land need across the upper- or single-tier municipality.

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1 Community area is a term from the Proposed Methodology for Land Needs Assessment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It refers to areas where the vast majority of housing required to accommodate forecasted population will be located, as well as the majority of population-related jobs, most office jobs and some employment land jobs. Community areas include delineated built-up areas and the designated greenfield area (excluding employment areas).
With respect to the range and mix of housing, the preparation of a housing strategy will also be done as part of the MCR process and could be initiated in parallel to the land needs assessment in order to help inform certain inputs. The final determination of the range and mix of housing options cannot be made until after the quantum of any new DGA has been determined, and it is recognized that there could be a number of different housing mix options that could accommodate growth.

Furthermore, an upper-tier municipality cannot finalize allocations of forecasted growth to lower-tier municipalities or identify minimum targets for lower-tier municipalities until later in the MCR process after the quantum and location of any new DGA has been determined (refer to section 3.6 of this draft guidance document).

### 3.5.1 Employment Area Conversions

The Growth Plan, 2017 requires upper- and single-tier municipalities, in consultation with lower-tier municipalities, to designate all employment areas, including any prime employment areas, in official plans and protect them for employment uses over the long-term. Any employment area or prime employment area that is designated in the upper- or single-tier official plan as part of the MCR is required to meet the definition of employment area and is subject to the employment area policies in the Growth Plan, 2017 including restrictions from conversion to non-employment uses.

Early in the MCR process, municipalities must assess the existing inventory of land designated for employment and should consider clearly identifying which employment areas or lands within employment areas may be appropriate for conversion to non-employment uses if it is determined through the MCR process that they are not required over the planning horizon for the employment purposes for which they are designated. For example, employment areas that are located in SGAs and are relatively further removed from major goods movement facilities and corridors may be more suitable for conversion to a mixed-use designation.

Identifying employment areas, including any prime employment areas, for designation in upper- and single-tier official plans is not necessarily a carry-forward of existing designations from approved and in-effect official plans as of July 1, 2017. However, existing designations provide the starting point for municipalities to determine any refinements or changes that need to be made to the delineation of any employment areas based on how their employment areas are classified, the outcome of the land needs assessment and whether any lands within existing employment areas are converted to non-employment uses.
If the results of the land needs assessment indicate a surplus of land in *employment areas*, further analysis must be undertaken to determine the appropriate approach to planning for currently designated *employment area* lands. If there is no shortage of community area land, a municipality may consider lands for conversion subject to meeting specific criteria in accordance with policy 2.2.5.9. If there is a shortage of community area land, municipalities will need to consider whether any *employment area* land is appropriate for conversion prior to undertaking a *settlement area* boundary expansion. However, a conversion could only occur if the municipality could demonstrate that it satisfied policy 2.2.5.9. Among other matters, this policy requires demonstration that the lands to be converted are not required over the horizon of the Growth Plan, 2017 for the employment purposes for which they are designated and that the proposed uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the *employment area*.

The process of assessing *employment area* land need could potentially be iterative. Once this iterative process is complete, the final designation of all *employment areas* in the upper- or single-tier official plan or official plan amendment that is submitted to the Province for approval must match the final reported results of the land needs assessment (and the *employment areas* that are “netted out” of the calculation of the *DGA* density target).

Approval by the Province of any *employment area* or *prime employment area* conversions will be based on review of appropriate documentation prepared by the municipality demonstrating that the proposed conversion conforms with policy 2.2.5.9. Policy 2.2.5.9 states:

> “The conversion of lands within *employment areas* or *prime employment areas* to non-employment uses may be permitted only through a municipal comprehensive review where it is demonstrated that:

a) there is a need for the conversion;

b) the lands are not required over the horizon of this Plan for the employment purposes for which they are designated;

c) the municipality will maintain sufficient employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth to the horizon of this Plan;

d) the proposed uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the *employment area* or *prime employment area* or the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets in this Plan, as well as the other policies of this Plan; and
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Policy 2.2.5.10 further clarifies the employment area conversion process. Policy 2.2.5.10 states:

“For greater certainty, the redesignation of an employment area to a designation that permits non-employment uses is considered a conversion and may occur only through a municipal comprehensive review undertaken in accordance with policy 2.2.5.9.”

The Growth Plan, 2017 supports municipal decisions regarding the prohibition of, or allowing for, major retail uses in employment areas up to a certain size and scale threshold in accordance with policy 2.2.5.7 b). Major retail uses are either prohibited in (prime) employment areas; or prohibited if they exceed a size or scale threshold permitted in employment areas, as established by municipalities. The threshold is a means of managing the amount of major retail in employment areas based on the definition and land use permissions in the Growth Plan, 2017. New or expanding major retail uses are subject to the provisions of policy 2.2.5.11, which relies on the size or scale threshold in order to define the circumstances under which the introduction of major retail into an employment area would constitute a conversion. Other policies in the Growth Plan direct major retail outside of employment areas and to locations that support active transportation and have existing or planned transit, however, given the diversity of local circumstances and existing designations, major retail is not outright prohibited in employment areas.

3.5.2 Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

The Growth Plan requires that settlement area boundaries be delineated in all official plans and that settlement area boundary expansions cannot occur outside of a MCR. The addition of any land to a settlement area is a settlement area boundary expansion.

Settlement area boundary expansions will be restricted in size to the amount of land required to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth within the horizon of the Growth Plan, 2017. For settlement areas in the Greenbelt Area, there are further restrictions on the size of a settlement area boundary expansion (see below).

Once the amount of land required to accommodate forecasted population and employment growth within the horizon of the Growth Plan, 2017 has been established using the Provincial methodology for land needs assessment issued by the Minister,
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the feasibility and location of such expansions will be determined based on the criteria specified in policy 2.2.8.3. The location of settlement area boundary expansions should be guided by the urban structure that was established earlier in the MCR process, which directs where growth should be focused. As explained in section 3.1 of this draft guidance document, as a best practice, the establishment of the urban structure should have already taken these criteria into account. Policy 2.2.8.3 states:

“Where the need for a settlement area boundary expansion has been justified in accordance with policy 2.2.8.2, the feasibility of the proposed expansion will be determined and the most appropriate location for the proposed expansion will be identified based on the following:

a) there are existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to support the achievement of complete communities;

b) the infrastructure and public service facilities needed would be financially viable over the full life cycle of these assets, based on mechanisms such as asset management planning and revenue generation analyses;

c) the proposed expansion would align with a water and wastewater master plan or equivalent that has been completed in accordance with the policies in subsection 3.2.6;

d) the proposed expansion would align with a stormwater master plan or equivalent that has been completed in accordance with the policies in subsection 3.2.7;

e) watershed planning or equivalent has demonstrated that the proposed expansion, including the associated servicing, would not negatively impact the water resource system, including the quality and quantity of water;

f) key hydrologic areas and the Natural Heritage System should be avoided where possible;

g) for settlement areas that receive their water from or discharge their sewage to inland lakes, rivers, or groundwater, a completed environmental assessment for new or expanded services has identified how expanded water and wastewater treatment capacity would be addressed in a manner that is fiscally and environmentally sustainable;

h) prime agricultural areas should be avoided where possible. An agricultural impact assessment will be used to determine the location of the expansion based on avoiding, minimizing and mitigating the impact on the Agricultural System and evaluating and prioritizing alternative locations.
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across the upper- or single-tier municipality in accordance with the following:

i. expansion into specialty crop areas is prohibited;

ii. reasonable alternatives that avoid prime agricultural areas are evaluated; and

iii. where prime agricultural areas cannot be avoided, lower priority agricultural lands are used;

i) the settlement area to be expanded is in compliance with the minimum distance separation formulae;

j) any adverse impacts on agricultural operations and on the agri-food network from expanding settlement areas would be avoided or, if avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated as determined through an agricultural impact assessment;

k) the policies of sections 2 (Wise Use and Management of Resources) and 3 (Protecting Public Health and Safety) of the PPS, 2014 are applied;

l) the proposed expansion would meet any applicable requirements of the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation, Niagara Escarpment, and Lake Simcoe Protection Plans and any applicable source protection plan;

The expansion tests in policy 2.2.8.3 clearly indicate that there are many planning considerations that determine the timing, location and form of a settlement area boundary expansion. These considerations should have already been factored into the establishment of a preliminary urban structure. As outlined in the policy above, availability of infrastructure and public service facilities, alignment with water, wastewater and stormwater master plans, assessment of the impacts of the expansion to the water resource system, the Natural Heritage System, and the Agricultural System, among others, all need to be assessed as part of a MCR to support a proposed settlement area boundary expansion.

Refer to section 4.2 of this draft guidance document for a list of supporting documentation that would be required for any proposed settlement area boundary expansions. Refer to section 2.5 of this draft guidance document for more information on the required background studies.


**Additional requirements for settlement areas in the Greenbelt Area**

In addition to the tests described above, policy 2.2.8.3 further states:

m) within the Protected Countryside in the Greenbelt Area:

i. the settlement area to be expanded is identified in the Greenbelt Plan as a Town/Village;

ii. the proposed expansion would be modest in size, representing no more than a 5 per cent increase in the geographic size of the settlement area based on the settlement area boundary delineated in the applicable official plan as of July 1, 2017, up to a maximum size of 10 hectares, and residential development would not be permitted on more than 50 per cent of the lands that would be added to the settlement area;

iii. the proposed expansion would support the achievement of complete communities or the local agricultural economy;

iv. the proposed uses cannot be reasonably accommodated within the existing settlement area boundary;

v. the proposed expansion would be serviced by existing municipal water and wastewater systems without impacting future intensification opportunities in the existing settlement area; and

vi. expansion into the Natural Heritage System that has been identified in the Greenbelt Plan is prohibited.”

Policy 2.2.8.3 m)(i) states that only settlement areas identified as Towns/Villages in the Greenbelt Plan are able to expand subject to additional requirements. Accordingly, settlement areas identified as Hamlets in the Greenbelt Plan cannot be proposed for a settlement area boundary expansion.

Policy 2.2.8.3 m)(ii) provides that such expansions can only be modest in size and sets out more explicitly what constitutes a modest expansion. This spatial limit for modest settlement area boundary expansions for Towns/Villages applies to each MCR process undertaken.

It is not expected that Towns/Villages in the Greenbelt Area would be the focus of growth in any urban structure, and most land needed for any expansion would be located elsewhere outside the Greenbelt Area. Refer to section 4.2 of this draft guidance document for a list of supporting evidence that would be required where a settlement area boundary expansion is proposed for a Town/Village in the Greenbelt Area.
In addition, for proposed settlement area boundary expansions in the Oak Ridges Moraine or Niagara Escarpment plan areas, there are additional considerations regarding the Provincial approval process. Where a settlement area boundary expansion is proposed in the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Minister would have to change the boundaries on the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Use Designation Map as part of the Minister’s Regulation, prior to municipal adoption of an official plan or official plan amendment showing a boundary expansion in the Oak Ridges Moraine. Any proposed settlement area boundary expansions would need to comply with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. Where a settlement area boundary expansion is proposed in the Niagara Escarpment, the legislation specifies that this can only take place during a ten-year review of the Niagara Escarpment Plan in accordance with section 17 of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act.

### 3.5.3 Excess Lands

The Growth Plan, 2017 defines excess lands as:

> “Lands within settlement areas but outside of delineated built-up areas that have been designated in an official plan for development but are in excess of what is needed to accommodate forecasted growth to the horizon of this Plan.”

This policy only applies to upper- and single-tier municipalities in the outer ring. For these municipalities, where the land needs assessment undertaken in accordance with policy 2.2.1.5 determines the municipality has designated more land than needed, policy 2.2.1.6 requires the municipality to “determine which lands will be identified as excess lands based on the hierarchy of settlement areas” (i.e., “urban structure;” refer to section 3.1 of this draft guidance document) and to “prohibit development on all excess lands to the horizon of this Plan.” Once identified, excess lands are no longer considered to be DGA.

The existence of excess lands in an upper- or single-tier municipality in the outer ring does not preclude consideration of a settlement area boundary expansion. Upper- and single-tier municipalities with excess lands may propose a settlement area boundary expansion if development within the proposed area of expansion would better meet the municipality’s growth objectives within the horizon of the Growth Plan, 2017 than would development of an equal portion of land that would not otherwise have been identified as excess lands. In such circumstances, policy 2.2.8.4 provides for an adjustment of the settlement area boundaries, where the amount of land being removed from the urban designation is greater than the amount being added, such that the overall area within the settlement area boundaries (including all undelineated...
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*built-up areas, DGA and excess lands* is reduced. Removal from urban designation would entail re-designating the lands back to either rural or agricultural, as appropriate. Lower-tier municipalities will need to update their *settlement area* boundaries to reflect any adjustments made by their respective upper-tier municipalities.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities in the *outer ring* with *excess lands* that propose a *settlement area* boundary expansion will have to ensure that all requirements of policies 2.2.8.2 and 2.2.8.3 have been satisfied, in accordance with policy 2.2.8.4 e). Additionally, the *settlement area* to be expanded should have already been identified as a focus for growth in the urban structure.

The methodology for assessing land needs issued by the Province will provide further information on how *excess lands* will be quantified.

### 3.5.4 Final Delineation of the Settlement Area Boundaries, Designated Greenfield Area and Excess Lands

Following the determination by upper- and single-tier municipalities of the location of any proposed *settlement area* boundary expansions, municipalities can finalize the delineation of any changes in *settlement area* boundaries, the *DGA* and *excess lands*.

*Inner ring* municipalities will delineate each portion of the *DGA* that is subject to a specific density target.

### 3.6 Allocate Updated Forecasts and Establish Targets for Lower-tier Municipalities

This component of the *MCR* process is only applicable to upper-tier municipalities.

Schedule 3 of the Growth Plan, 2017 provides population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities within the *GGH* to the Growth Plan, 2017 horizon (currently 2041). These forecasts help ensure a more consistent and co-ordinated approach to planning and are to be used by municipalities to plan for growth and development. Updated growth forecasts to 2041 will be incorporated into upper- and single-tier official plans through the next *MCR* process.

Upper-tier municipalities (in consultation with lower-tier municipalities) are responsible for the allocation of forecasted population and employment growth to the Growth Plan, 2017 horizon to lower-tier municipalities. This is one of the last steps to be completed as part of the *MCR* process, as a means of implementing the final urban
structure (including growth that is planned for SGAs, including UGCs and MTSAs). The allocation of forecasts must occur after land needs assessment has been completed and the location of any settlement area boundary expansion(s) (or excess lands) has been determined.

In order to implement the MCR, upper-tier official plans are required to clearly allocate population and employment forecasts to the Growth Plan horizon for each lower-tier municipality. Once those forecasts are in effect in the upper-tier official plan, then lower-tier municipalities can undertake detailed planning for how to accommodate the forecasted growth that has been allocated to them (within the settlement area boundaries that were delineated in the upper-tier official plan through the MCR).

Policy 5.2.4.6 of the Growth Plan, 2017 states that outside of a MCR, Schedule 3 and Schedule 7 forecasts cannot be applied on a site-specific scale as the basis for approving or refusing proposals for development that would otherwise conform with all the policies of the Growth Plan, 2017. This policy recognizes that while the Schedule 3 and Schedule 7 forecasts are a key input into the determination of land need as part of the MCR process, there are a range of factors that affect the timing and sequencing of development within delineated settlement area boundaries once detailed planning has been undertaken. Any disparities in pacing would be reconciled through the next forecast review and the subsequent MCR process. For example, after an official plan that implements the MCR has been approved, a subsequent secondary plan for a SGA located in the delineated built-up area may be planned to accommodate growth that would exceed Schedule 3 forecasts (e.g., growth beyond that which would have been anticipated at the time of the MCR). This increase in density would be factored in at the next MCR.

In addition, upper-tier municipalities are to identify intensification and DGA density targets for lower-tier municipalities. Like the allocation of forecasts to the Growth Plan horizon, this is required to be done through policies incorporated into upper-tier official plans as part of the MCR process. Targets may differ among lower-tier municipalities, provided the overall target is planned to be achieved within the time horizon of the Growth Plan, 2017 at the upper-tier level.

3.7 Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System Mapping

As of February 9, 2018, the Agricultural System for the GGH and Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan came into effect. The mapping applies immediately and
where there is a conflict between land use designations in provincial mapping and a municipal official plan, provincial plan direction prevails in accordance with s. 14(2) of the Places to Grow Act, 2005.

Municipalities must base their decision-making on unrefined provincial mapping of the Agricultural System and the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan until a MCR when upper- and single-tier municipalities may propose refinements to the mapping.

### 3.7.1 Natural Heritage System Mapping

The provincially-mapped *Natural Heritage System* is intended to support a comprehensive, integrated, and long-term approach to planning for the protection of the region’s natural heritage and biodiversity. Policy 4.2.2.2 of the Growth Plan, 2017 states:

> “Municipalities will incorporate the *Natural Heritage System* as an overlay in official plans, and will apply appropriate policies to maintain, restore, or enhance the diversity and connectivity of the system and the long-term ecological or hydrologic functions of the features and areas as set out in the policies in this subsection and the policies in subsections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.”

The *Natural Heritage System* mapping issued by the Province applies immediately to all planning decisions that are required to conform with the Growth Plan, 2017. The Growth Plan, 2017 requires municipalities to incorporate the *Natural Heritage System* as an overlay in their official plans.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities will comprehensively incorporate the provincially-issued *Natural Heritage System* mapping into their official plans through a MCR. They may also incorporate the mapping through an official plan amendment before a MCR, so long as no refinements are made. Lower-tier municipalities should consider waiting to incorporate provincial mapping into their official plans until the upper-tier municipality has completed their MCR, which may involve refinements to the *Natural Heritage System*. If a lower-tier municipality chooses to incorporate provincial mapping in their official plan before the upper-tier municipality has completed their MCR, they must do so in accordance with the unrefined provincial mapping.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities may refine provincial mapping of the *Natural Heritage System* with greater precision in accordance with policy 4.2.2.5, and can only do so through the MCR (subject to Provincial approval). Refinements must be done in a manner that is consistent with the *Natural Heritage System* principles and criteria developed for mapping the system and the policies of the Growth Plan.
Where refinements to the Natural Heritage System mapping are proposed, such refinements will be supported by appropriate documentation, including any fine-scale mapping of natural features or infrastructure that was used to adjust boundaries, and be submitted to the Province for review along with the proposed official plan or official plan amendment implementing the results of the MCR process. Information regarding the Natural Heritage System principles and criteria and refinements that are consistent with the policies of the Growth Plan, 2017 can be found in the summary of criteria and methods, “The Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe – summary of criteria and methods,” and the technical report on criteria, rationale and methods, “The Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe – technical report on criteria, rationale and methods.”

Upper- and single-tier municipalities may adjust the Natural Heritage System boundary as required to exclude lands within settlement area boundaries approved in upper- and single-tier official plans in effect as of July 1, 2017, as the mapping does not apply in these areas. Such adjustments would not be considered to be refinements and can therefore be done outside of the MCR.

With regard to settlement area boundary expansions, while the Growth Plan directs that the Natural Heritage System should be avoided where possible, expansions into the Natural Heritage System are not prohibited. If the Natural Heritage System is brought into a settlement area through a settlement area boundary expansion, policy 4.2.2.7 requires its continued protection according to the PPS, including through designation in the official plan (instead of an overlay as required outside of settlement areas).

3.7.2 Agricultural System Mapping

The Agricultural System includes a continuous productive land base, comprised of prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and rural lands, as well as a complementary agri-food network that together create a viable, thriving agricultural sector. Policy 4.2.6.2 states:

“Prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, will be designated in accordance with mapping identified by the Province and these areas will be protected for long-term use for agriculture.”

The Agricultural System mapping issued by the Province applies immediately to all planning decisions that are required to conform with the Growth Plan, 2017.
Upper- and single-tier municipalities may comprehensively incorporate the provincially-issued agricultural land base mapping of *prime agricultural areas* and *specialty crop areas*, without refinements or augmentations, into their official plans through an official plan amendment in advance of the *MCR*. Lower-tier municipalities should consider waiting to incorporate provincial mapping into their official plans until the upper-tier municipality has completed their *MCR*, which may involve refinements or augmentations to the provincial agricultural land base map. If a lower-tier municipality chooses to incorporate provincial mapping into their official plan before the upper-tier municipality has completed their *MCR*, they must designate *prime agricultural areas* in accordance with the unrefined provincial mapping of the agricultural land base. In such cases, it is expected that they will continue to treat candidate areas as they are currently designated in approved and in effect official plans.

Upper- and single-tier municipalities may refine or augment provincial mapping of the *Agricultural System* in accordance with policy 4.2.6.9. Upper- and single-tier municipalities may only propose removals and additions of land to the *Agricultural System* mapping through a *MCR* (subject to Provincial approval). This must be done in a manner that conforms with the policies of the Growth Plan, 2017 and “Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario’s Greater Golden Horseshoe” issued by the Province.

Where removals or additions to the agricultural land base mapping are proposed, such refinements will be supported by appropriate documentation, including studies if completed, together with fine-scale mapping, submitted to the Province for review along with the proposed official plan or official plan amendment implementing the results of the *MCR* process. Any additional related refinements for proposed *settlement area* boundary expansions would take place later in the *MCR* process, once precise locations have been determined. For more information, refer to “Implementation Procedures for the Agricultural System in Ontario’s Greater Golden Horseshoe.”

The above mentioned implementation procedures provide information on candidate areas for the agricultural land base. As part of the *MCR*, upper- and single-tier municipalities will ascertain whether these lands should be added to the *prime agricultural area* or *rural lands* within the agricultural land base. In the meantime, *development* applications could be received in areas mapped as candidate areas for the agricultural land base before the upper- or single-tier municipality has completed the *MCR*. Until the *MCR* is completed, the existing in effect official plan designations and zoning apply to candidate areas.
4 Implementation of the Municipal Comprehensive Review Process

The MCR process is an iterative one, with many points in the process where new information may help inform the final resolution of issues for which preliminary determinations need to be made. In order to avoid unnecessary delay in the completion of the MCR and subsequent approval of the implementing official plan or official plan amendment under section 26 of the Planning Act, municipalities should consult with Provincial staff on key elements early and often throughout the MCR process.

4.1 Provincial Input throughout the Municipal Comprehensive Review Process

While Provincial staff will provide support to all municipalities as questions may arise on a range of issues throughout the MCR process, some of the key aspects of Growth Plan implementation (e.g., forecasts, targets, land needs assessment, settlement area boundary expansions) require appropriate sequencing (as outlined in this draft guidance document). To ensure the process is undertaken efficiently and effectively, municipalities should seek Provincial input (whether formal or informal) at certain milestones throughout the process.

4.1.1 Minister’s Permission to Use Alternative Targets

Municipalities should seek written permission from the Minister on alternative intensification or density targets early in the MCR process, including before using them as inputs into a final land needs assessment. In order to obtain the Minister’s approval to plan based on alternative targets, upper- and single-tier municipalities will:

- Prepare all required supporting evidence and documentation relating to the request for an alternative target;
- Obtain a council resolution requesting the Minister permit the use of an alternative target; and
- Submit the request to the Minister, including all required supporting evidence and documentation and a copy of the council resolution.

Where an upper- or single-tier municipality had previously received permission to use an alternative target, a new request must be made as part of each MCR process. In the
absence of such a request, the targets as provided for in the Growth Plan, 2017 will be the minimum requirements.

While lower-tier municipalities can assist upper-tier municipalities in making requests for alternative targets (e.g., share data or provide supporting evidence), only upper-tier municipalities can make the request to the Province and the Minister will only permit alternative targets at the upper-tier level.

4.1.2 Other Checkpoints with Provincial Staff

Consultation between upper- and single-tier municipalities and Provincial staff is encouraged at certain critical milestones in the MCR process. This consultation will be more effective when any background analysis is shared with the Province to review in advance. Section 17 of the Planning Act sets out the minimum requirements for upper- and single-tier municipalities to consult with the Ministry on the preparation of their official or official plan amendment, however the following checkpoints are also recommended:

- Prior to undertaking the land needs assessment, to discuss the background work (including its completeness) and the rationale provided for all of the key inputs (e.g., targets) that are required; and
- After undertaking the land needs assessment, to discuss any issues of compliance with the Provincial methodology, discuss reasonableness of applicable assumptions and to determine next steps for implementing the results.

In addition, prior to submitting the adopted official plan or official plan amendment to the Province for approval, upper- and single-tier municipalities should consult with Provincial staff on the following, where applicable:

- Proposed urban structure;
- Proposed delineations of the areas to which targets will apply;
- Proposed settlement area boundary expansions and all related studies;
- Proposed identification of excess lands;
- Proposed employment area conversions;
- Proposed allocation of forecasts and targets for lower-tier municipalities;
- Identification of deposits of mineral aggregate resources;
- Identification of key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features, key hydrologic areas, and hazardous lands; and
- Proposed refinements to the Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System mapping.
Implementation of the Municipal Comprehensive Review Process

Provincial staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, as the authority for the One Window land use planning service in Ontario, will be the primary contact for these checkpoints, and staff from other ministries may be involved as appropriate.

4.2 Duty to Consult with First Nations and Métis Communities

In implementing the Growth Plan, 2017, the Province recognizes the importance of consulting and/or engaging with First Nations and Métis communities on planning matters that may affect their rights and interests. Provincial plans must be implemented by municipalities in a manner that is consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Municipalities have broad powers as responsible, accountable, and transparent levels of government, and are encouraged to build constructive, cooperative relationships with Aboriginal communities based on mutual respect, to work collaboratively on shared interests and to develop local solutions to concerns raised.

Early on, and throughout, the MCR process, municipalities should engage Indigenous communities to determine whether any Aboriginal or treaty rights (or interests) may be impacted by municipal land use planning decisions. Municipalities are best positioned to explain their approach to the MCR process, and to determine a local solution to any required amendments to their official plans.

As the approval authority for the MCR, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs will consider whether additional engagement by the municipality is required.

4.3 Approval of Municipal Comprehensive Review under the Planning Act

Upper-and single-tier municipalities are required to submit an official plan or official plan amendment implementing the MCR that has been adopted by council for approval by the Minister under the Planning Act. A copy of the proposed official plan or official plan amendment must be provided to the Province at least 90 days prior to giving notice of the public meeting (Planning Act, section 17(17.1).

The proposed official plan or official plan amendment must be accompanied by the following documentation to support the policy requirements in the Growth Plan, where applicable:
Implementation of the Municipal Comprehensive Review Process

- Analysis to support the established urban structure;
- Land needs assessment completed in accordance with Provincial methodology;
- Intensification strategy;
- Employment strategy;
- Housing strategy (beyond official plan policies, any other tools/approaches that will be utilized);
- Analysis to justify any employment area conversions;
- Analysis to justify any refinements to the Natural Heritage System and/or Agricultural System;
- Infrastructure/public service facilities plans, including master plans as required;
- For excess lands in outer ring municipalities, evidence to demonstrate how these lands are being managed (including official plan policies, as well as any other tools/approaches that will be utilized such as those set out in policy 5.2.8.4);
- Transportation demand management approaches (beyond official plan policies, any other tools/approaches that will be utilized);
- If extension of water and wastewater services from a Great Lakes source is required for settlement areas that are serviced by rivers, inland lakes or groundwater, evidence that complies with the criteria in policy 3.2.6.3;
- If a settlement area boundary expansion(s) is proposed, any background studies to support policy 2.2.8.3, including:
  - Evidence that there are sufficient existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities, and that the infrastructure and public service facilities needed would be financially viable over the full life cycle of these assets;
  - Water and wastewater master plan or equivalent;
  - Environmental assessment for new or expanded water and wastewater services (only applicable for settlement areas serviced by groundwater/inland lakes);
  - Stormwater master plan or equivalent;
  - Watershed planning or equivalent;
  - Assessment of key hydrologic areas and options to avoid them, where possible;
  - Assessment of the Natural Heritage System and options to avoid it, where possible;
  - Agricultural impact assessment (including options to avoid or mitigate impacts on the Agricultural System, where possible); and
  - Evidence of compliance with minimum distance separation formulae.
• Furthermore, if a settlement area boundary expansion is proposed for a Town/Village in the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Area, supporting evidence is required to demonstrate that:
  o No settlement area boundary expansion is proposed into the Natural Heritage System that has been identified in the Greenbelt Plan;
  o Only a modest expansion is proposed (no more than a 5% increase in geographic size as of July 1st, 2017 up to a maximum of 10 ha; only 50% of the added lands can be residential); and,
  o As the Greenbelt Plan policies do not allow for the extension of Great Lakes servicing, a settlement area boundary expansion within the Protected Countryside would be serviced by existing municipal water and wastewater systems, while not impacting on the ability to service future intensification opportunities.


Further implementation of the upper- and single-tier official plans will occur through subsequent planning decisions, after the approval of the implementing official plan or official plan amendment. Examples include:

• Detailed planning (e.g., secondary planning) for the DGA, in accordance with policy 2.2.7.1;
• Implementation of mitigation requirements identified as part of an agricultural impact assessment to support a settlement area boundary expansion;
• Detailed planning for a specific range and mix of housing options; and
• Updating zoning by-laws to implement density targets (lower- and single-tier municipalities will update zoning by-laws to conform with official plans within legislated timeframes).

In two-tier municipalities, lower-tier municipalities are required to bring their official plans into conformity with the applicable upper-tier official plan and the Growth Plan, 2017 within one year of the MCR being approved and in effect. For this reason, it is important that upper- and lower-tier municipalities collaborate throughout the MCR process (refer to section 2.3 of this draft guidance document) so that implementation can be completed in an efficient manner.
5 Appendices
Appendix 1  Summary of Growth Plan, 2017 Transition

ALL planning matters commenced before July 1, 2017 but not yet approved and in effect by that date are required to conform with the new Growth Plan, 2017.

Exception: certain matters commenced before June 16, 2006 that were not subject to the Growth Plan, 2006 continue to be transitioned under O. Reg. 311/06 (some provisions expire July 1, 2018). Upper- or single-tier municipality-initiated official plans or official plan amendments adopted between June 16, 2006 and May 17, 2017 involving a settlement area boundary expansion are to be disposed of in accordance with the original Growth Plan, 2006.

Key policy areas where some significant changes have been made include, for example, enhanced policy direction on planning for complete communities, climate change (e.g., green infrastructure and low impact development), urban designs, and station access in major transit station areas, etc.

H OW E V E R:

The following new policy requirements DO NOT apply to matters in process until the applicable upper- or single-tier municipality has completed its next municipal comprehensive review (i.e., new official plan or official plan amendment under section 25 of the Planning Act):

- Updated forecasts in Schedule 3 and the planning horizons of 2041;
- Increases in the intensification target and density target for designated greenfield areas (including revisiting and establishment of alternative targets, where applicable and establishment of new density targets for employment areas);
- Density targets for major transit station areas on priority transit corridors or subways;
- Determination of lands subject to certain policies: major transit station areas, other strategic growth areas, each portion of the designated greenfield area that is subject to a specific density target, and any excess lands; and
- Prohibition of development on any excess lands.

IN ADDITION:

Certain policy changes require that some in process matters that were permissibly initiated by a lower-tier municipality under the 2006 Growth Plan be deferred until the time of the next municipal comprehensive review, which can now only be completed by an upper-tier municipality, including:

- any employment area conversions in process that were initiated by a lower-tier municipality; and
- any settlement area boundary expansions in process that were initiated by a lower-tier municipality in Simcoe County.

The Growth Plan transition regulation (O. Reg. 311/06) allows for upper or single-tier municipality-initiated official plans or official plan amendments adopted between June 16, 2006 and May 17, 2017 involving a settlement area boundary expansion to be disposed of in accordance with the original Growth Plan, 2006.

It also allows for certain matters commenced before June 16, 2006 that were not subject to the Growth Plan, 2006 to continue without requirement to conform with the new Growth Plan, 2017.

TH I S I N C L U D E S :

- All matters that were not official plans or official plan amendments:
  - Official plans or official plan amendments that met any one of the following criteria:
    - Did not involve a settlement area boundary expansion, (O. Reg. 311/06 section 3(1)); or
    - Involved a settlement area boundary expansion <500ha, (O. Reg. 311/06 section 3(1)); or
    - Were part of an expansion area prescribed under section 24(3) of Greenbelt Act, 2005, (O. Reg. 311/06 sections 4(3) and 5(3));
  - Official plans or official plan amendments that involved a settlement area boundary expansion >500ha were subject to the Growth Plan, with the exception of policy 2.2.8 (tests for settlement area boundary expansions), provided:
    - If municipally-initiated, it had been adopted, (O. Reg. 311/06 section 5(2)); or
    - If provincially-initiated, it had been approved, (O. Reg. 311/06 section 4(3)).

H O W E V E R:

Historic transition provisions for matters initiated pre-Growth Plan (prior to June 16, 2006) involving a settlement area boundary expansion will expire on July 1, 2018. As of that date, the only historic matters that will not be subject to the requirement to conform with the Growth Plan will be matters that were initiated pre-Growth Plan that did not involve a settlement area boundary expansion.
Appendix 2  Examples of Policies that may be Relevant to Decisions on Matters in Process Prior to Completion of the MCR

This list of examples is for illustrative purposes only and is intended to demonstrate policies that are new to the Growth Plan, 2017. In making a decision on such matters, it is the responsibility of the decision maker to determine whether the test of Growth Plan, 2017 conformity has been met. The Province is of the view that efforts to address Growth Plan policies that are not expressly linked to a MCR can occur as part of the regular process of review and approving development applications and should not unduly delay that process. Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of policy requirements that do not apply to decisions on matters in process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
<th>Relevant Policies</th>
<th>Description (Refer to policies in the Growth Plan, 2017 for the full policy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complete Communities</strong></td>
<td>2.2.1.4</td>
<td>Includes recognition of the need to plan for growth in a manner that improves social equity and quality of life, urban agriculture and expanding convenient access to local healthy food, as well as requirement to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, and integrate <strong>green infrastructure</strong> and <strong>low impact development</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Major Transit Station Areas</strong></td>
<td>2.2.4.8</td>
<td><strong>MTSAs</strong> will be planned for connections to local and regional transit services, <strong>active transportation</strong> infrastructure and connections to commuter pick-up/drop-off areas.</td>
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<td>2.2.4.9</td>
<td>Promotes development in all <strong>MTSAs</strong>, by planning for a diverse mix of uses (including <strong>affordable housing</strong>), fostering collaboration between public and private sectors, providing alternative development standards, and prohibiting land use and built form that would adversely affect the achievement of <strong>transit-supportive</strong> densities, where appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td>2.2.5.3</td>
<td>Directs retail and office uses to locations with <strong>active transportation</strong> and have existing or planned transit.</td>
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<td>2.2.5.7</td>
<td>Sets out prohibited uses in <strong>employment areas</strong>, provides direction to set out a size or scale threshold for <strong>major retail</strong> where these uses are permitted, and how plan for <strong>employment areas</strong> in conjunction with adjacent areas.</td>
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<td>2.2.5.12</td>
<td>Provides direction on planning for the retail sector – promoting <strong>compact built form</strong> and <strong>intensification</strong> of retail and service uses and areas.</td>
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<td>2.2.5.13</td>
<td>Supports existing <strong>office parks</strong> by improving connectivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Area</td>
<td>Relevant Policies</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>with transit and active transportation networks, fostering a mix of amenities to serve the workforce, encouraging intensification of employment uses, and reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles through transportation demand management.</td>
<td>2.2.5.14 Encourages municipalities to undertake a co-ordinated approach to planning for large areas with high concentrations of employment that cross municipal boundaries.</td>
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<td>2.2.6.3 Encourages municipalities to use available tools to require that multi-unit residential developments incorporate a mix of unit sizes to accommodate a diverse range of household sizes and incomes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2.9.2 Emphasizes that public service facilities in rural areas should be co-located in community hubs, and that priority should be given to maintaining and adapting existing public service facilities in community hubs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Areas</td>
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<td>2.2.9.4 Builds on the PPS, 2014 to clarify resource-based recreational uses in the GGH.</td>
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<td>2.2.9.5 Recognizes existing rural employment areas and clarifies that expansions to existing rural employment areas are permitted if necessary to support the immediate needs of existing businesses, and if compatible with surrounding uses.</td>
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<td>3.2.2.3 Requires municipalities to adopt a complete streets approach in the design, refurbishment, or reconstruction of the existing and planned street network.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2.2.4 Specifies additional actions that municipalities will undertake to advance provincial transportation demand management objectives. Among these actions are several concepts that are new to the Growth Plan, but are already widely practiced in municipalities such as setting modal share targets and targeting major trip generators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stormwater Management</td>
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<td>3.2.7.2 Requires proposals for large-scale development to be supported by a stormwater management plan or equivalent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2.3.1 Prohibits development or site alteration in key natural heritage features in the Natural Heritage System and key hydrologic features outside of settlement areas, with some exceptions (e.g., forest, fish, and wildlife management, infrastructure authorized under an environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Area</td>
<td>Relevant Policies</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>(Refer to policies in the Growth Plan, 2017 for the full policy)</td>
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| 4.2.3.2 | Permits large-scale development in key hydrologic areas outside of settlement areas, provided it is demonstrated that the area’s hydrologic functions, including the quality and quantity of water, will be maintained, improved, or restored. |
| 4.2.4.1 | For lands outside of settlement areas, outlines the requirements for lands within 120 metres of key natural heritage features in the Natural Heritage System and key hydrologic features. |
| 4.2.4.2 | Requires natural heritage and hydrologic evaluations to identify any additional restrictions to be applied before, during and after development. |
| 4.2.4.3 | Restricts development in the established vegetation protection zone. |
| 4.2.4.4 | Provides direction on development or site alteration on a site where the only key natural heritage feature is the habitat of endangered species and threatened species. This policy also clarifies that agricultural buildings do not require an environmental study if a 30 metre vegetation protection zone is provided around all key natural heritage features in the Natural Heritage System and key hydrologic features outside settlement areas. |
| 4.2.4.5 | Sets conditions for development in developed shoreline areas. |
| 4.2.7.1 | Sets out that cultural heritage resources will be conserved, particularly in strategic growth areas, and to align with PPS, 2014. |
| 4.2.8.4 | Sets out rehabilitation requirements for new mineral aggregate operation sites. |
| 4.2.9.1 | Requires the development of policies around energy conservation for existing and planned developments, further requirements for alternative energy systems, and building conservation and adaptive reuse. |
| 4.2.9.3 | Requires municipalities to incorporate best practices for the management of excess soil generated and fill received during development or site alteration. |
| 4.2.10.1 | Requires municipalities to develop climate change policies in their official plans to align with the Climate Change
<table>
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<td>(Refer to policies in the Growth Plan, 2017 for the full policy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>5.2.4.6</td>
<td>Clarifies that the forecasts in Schedules 3 and 7 cannot be applied on a site-specific scale as the basis for approving or refusing development proposals that would otherwise conform with all the policies of this Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>5.2.5.7</td>
<td>Clarifies that the minimum intensification and density targets do not require or permit development that is beyond what has been permitted in Special Policy Areas, as well as development that is not permitted by the PPS in other hazardous lands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>