

Report To:	Regional Chair and Members of Regional Council
From:	Bob Gray, Commissioner, Legislative and Planning Services and Corporate Counsel
Date:	February 17, 2021
Report No:	LPS18-21
Re:	Regional Official Plan Review - Integrated Growth Management Strategy - Growth Concepts Discussion Paper

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT Report No. LPS18-21 re: “Regional Official Plan Review – Integrated Growth Management Strategy – Growth Concepts Discussion Paper” be received.
2. THAT Regional Council direct staff to release the “Regional Official Plan Review – Integrated Growth Management Strategy – Growth Concepts Discussion Paper” (under separate cover) and associated landing page attached to Report No. LPS18-21, as a basis for public consultation on the Regional Official Plan Review to conclude at the end of May 2021.
3. THAT the input received from the Local Municipalities, public agencies, and the public, be considered in the development of a draft Preferred Growth Concept to accommodate population and employment growth to 2051, for the consideration of Regional Council at the next stage of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.
4. THAT the Regional Clerk forward a copy of Report No. LPS18-21, the Integrated Growth Management Strategy - Growth Concepts Discussion Paper (document under separate cover) and attached Landing Page, to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, the Town of Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation, and the Grand River Conservation Authority, for their information.

## REPORT

### **Executive Summary**

- The Regional Official Plan Review is underway and currently in Phase 2. Phase 2 focusses on research, technical analysis and development of Discussion Papers related to key themes of the Regional Official Plan Review.
- There have been three reports or Discussion Papers released to date that explore issues and opportunities related to the Integrated Growth Management Strategy component of the Regional Official Plan Review with respect to where and how to grow to 2051 as follows:
  - The *Growth Scenarios Report* was tabled at Regional Council in June 2019 through Report No. LPS41-19 –“Regional Official Plan Review – Progress Update on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Preliminary Growth Scenarios” and subsequently endorsed in May 2020.
  - The *Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper* was received by Regional Council in July 2020 through Report No. LPS56-20, and released together with its landing page for public consultation.
  - The *Supplemental Discussion Paper* presented in Report No. LPS89-20 addressed a request by the City of Burlington for consideration of a boundary adjustment to the Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre, and removal of the Downtown Burlington Major Transit Station Area designation from the Regional Official Plan.
- The *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* is provided as Attachment #5 (under separate cover) to this report. It is available in electronic format as part of Agenda for February 17, 2021 on Halton.ca and will be released as a basis for public consultation.
- The *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* builds on the matters discussed in the previous Discussion Papers and additionally profiles:
  - Four Growth Concepts that have been developed based upon the four ‘Local Plans and Priorities’ Growth Scenarios, which Council directed to be advanced as the foundation for the Concepts, in July 2020; and
  - An evaluation of the four Growth Concepts using the Evaluation Framework endorsed by Council in July 2020 and supported by technical analysis.

- For reference, there are several other attachments that accompany this report as follows:
  - Attachment #1 contains an Executive Summary of the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper*, summarizing the analysis and findings;
  - Attachment #2 contains the proposed content for a 'Landing Page'. The Landing Page has been developed to provide a simplified, plain language summary of the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* that can be accessible to the general public and used for web content and other materials developed to support the engagement program.
  - Attachment #3 provides a diagram showing the timeline of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy component of the Regional Official Plan Review in relation to the scoped Regional Urban Structure amendment to the Regional Official Plan (addressed in Report No. LPS17-21); and,
  - Attachment #4 contains Appendix K to the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper*, which is the evaluation of the Growth Concepts based upon the Evaluation Framework.
- A Regional Council workshop to review the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* and other matters related to the Regional Official Plan is scheduled for February 10, 2021.
- It is recommended that the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* and Landing Page be released as the basis for public consultation as described in this Report.

## Background

The Integrated Growth Management Strategy is an integral component of the Regional Official Plan Review that will ultimately address where and how Halton grows as required by the Province's Growth Plan, 2019.

In May 2020, Regional Council endorsed Report No. LPS41-19 that profiled eight growth scenarios as a means to identify a preliminary range of choice with respect to population and employment growth. Council authorized staff to proceed with the development of four Growth Concepts built upon the four 'Local Plans and Priorities' Growth Scenarios. The four Growth Concepts respond to local plans and priorities of the local municipalities of Halton, and are supported by studies by the local municipalities with respect to their capacity to accommodate growth through intensification within the Built-up Area (BUA), focused in strategic growth nodes and corridors.

While the Growth Scenarios presented in Report No. LPS41-19 were based on population and employment growth to 2041 in response to the Growth Plan in effect at that time, the Growth Plan, 2019 now requires planning for growth to 2051 as part of municipal comprehensive reviews of Official Plans. As a result, the four Growth Concepts address population and employment forecasts of 1.1 million people and 500,000 jobs to 2051, as outlined in this report.

### Evaluation Framework

In May 2020 through Report No. LPS41-19, and based on the results of the local municipal consultation outlined in Report No. LPS44-20, Regional Council also endorsed a framework for the evaluation of the Growth Concepts that is organized around four themes of assessment, based upon the policies of the Regional Official Plan, Provincial Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement:

- Theme 1: Regional Urban System and Local Urban Structure
- Theme 2: Infrastructure and Financing
- Theme 3: Agriculture, Environment and Climate Change
- Theme 4: Growing the Economy and Moving People and Goods.

Under each theme there are a series of measures or criteria to provide an assessment of how each growth concept best achieves the measure, and how the concept performs relative to the other concepts related to each measure.

The purpose of the Evaluation Framework is to explore the trade-offs related to the range of choices when allocating population and employment growth. It is not intended to be an exercise where the concepts are ranked or scored without fully understanding what aspects of each concept impact the evaluation results. Accordingly, it is important to note that this exercise will not result in a recommendation to select a particular concept as there may be aspects from all four concepts that could ultimately be incorporated in the development of a Preferred Growth Concept. The evaluation is intended to facilitate a conversation with the community around priorities and trade-offs related to where and how to grow, as outlined in Report LPS44-20.

### Regional Urban Structure

In July 2020 through Report No. LPS56-20, the Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper was released for public consultation. The Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper explored how urban structure elements can be incorporated in the Regional Official Plan to support local municipal plans and priorities and also discussed requests for employment conversions, and the approach to be taken in assessing those requests. In particular, the Regional Urban Structure Discussion Paper provided information on the hierarchy of strategic growth areas that could comprise a proposed Regional Urban Structure, including:

- Urban Growth Centres (UGCs) – Midtown Oakville, Downtown Burlington and Downtown Milton. A supplemental discussion paper outlined proposed adjustments to the boundary of the Downtown Burlington UGC.
- Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) – proposed delineated boundaries for the MTSAs of the Region were presented.
- Regional Nodes – other strategic growth nodes identified by the local municipalities and/or through previous studies by the Region.
- Regional Corridors – corridors connecting strategic growth nodes, with both a transit network and a growth accommodation function.

In September 2020, through Report No. LPS84-20, Regional Council directed staff to advance an initial scoped Regional Official Plan Amendment to bring forward strategic priorities of the local municipalities with respect to the Regional Urban Structure.

Report No. LPS17-21 that is included on the Regional Council agenda, presents an initial scoped Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) to advance Regional Urban Structure elements for the purposes of initiating the public process, including consultation. The amendment is intended to allow the local municipalities to advance several strategic priorities without precluding decisions on the allocation of growth to each local municipality and/or whether a settlement area expansion should occur, which will be determined through the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

## **Discussion**

The *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* is organized into several sections that are intended to:

- Outline how the Integrated Growth Management Strategy responds to provincial policies and plans as required, and builds upon the Sustainable Halton Plan;
- Discuss the key factors that influence the make-up of the Growth Concepts;
- Explain how the Regional Urban Structure aligns with provincial policy and addresses local municipal plans and priorities;
- Outline the four Growth Concepts, and the focus of growth in strategic growth areas, and the potential conversion of employment areas (including an updated inventory of conversion requests and an initial assessment), which underpin each growth concept;
- Present the locational options for settlement boundary expansion, and the analysis that informs the growth concepts evaluation;

- Summarize the water/wastewater, transportation and financial impact analysis that inform the growth concepts evaluation; and,
- Outline the results of the evaluation of the growth concepts.

**Overview of the Growth Concepts**

All four Growth Concepts achieve the minimum policy requirements of the Growth Plan, 2019, including the minimum intensification rate of 50 percent of all new residential units within the Built-Up Area. Further, all four Growth Concepts are based upon a planned density of 65 persons and jobs per hectare for the new Community Area Designated Greenfield Area, exceeding the Growth Plan minimum of 50 residents and jobs per hectare. All of the concepts also protect and do not encroach on the proposed Regional Natural Heritage System (including the Natural Heritage System of the Growth Plan) developed as part of the current Regional Official Plan Review.

The four Growth Concepts have some key differences, which are intended to facilitate discussion around the key choices on where and how to accommodate population and employment growth in the Region to 2051.

For example, each Growth Concept has a distinct rate of intensification (population accommodated within the Built-Up Area) and/or densification (population accommodated within the existing Designated Greenfield Area) for the 2031 to 2051 period, and the amount of new Community Area Designated Greenfield Area proposed to be added by settlement boundary expansion to accommodate the population growth which is not accommodated within the approved 2031 settlement area boundary.

<p><b>Concept 1: 60% Densification/ Moderate Greenfield Expansion</b></p>	<p><b>Concept 2: 70% Densification/ Limited Greenfield Expansion</b></p>	<p><b>Concept 3: 80% Densification/ Employment Area Only Expansion</b></p>	<p><b>Concept 4: 50% Intensification/ Greatest Greenfield Expansion</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% densification to 2031 then 60% densification* to 2051</li> <li>• Lower share of employment growth in Employment Areas relative to Concept 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-half the amount of new Community Area DGA of Concept 1</li> <li>• 70% densification* (2031-51)</li> <li>• Share of employment growth in Employment Areas midway between Concepts 1 and 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build out of existing Community Area DGA only</li> <li>• About 80% densification* (2031-51)</li> <li>• Least share of employment growth in Employment Areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% intensification in BUA (2031-51)</li> <li>• Greatest share of employment growth in Employment Areas</li> </ul>

	Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4
New Community Area DGA (ha)	1,460	730	0	2,080
Milton/Halton Hills split (%)	49:51	55:45	N/A	34:66
New Employment Area DGA (ha)	1,170	1,100	980	1,220
Milton/Halton Hills split (%)	42:58	54:46	54:46	45:55
Total Settlement Area Expansion (ha)	2,630	1,830	980	3,300

As shown above, Concept 3 has the highest rate of intensification/densification and a settlement boundary expansion for new employment area only, while Concept 4 is based on the minimum 50 percent rate of intensification, and the greatest Designated Greenfield Area expansion. Concepts 1 and 2 are between Concepts 3 and 4 with respect to the intensification rate and quantum of Designated Greenfield Area (DGA) expansion tested.

As noted previously, the purpose of the development of the Growth Concepts is not to select one of the concepts, but to conduct a comparative analysis based upon the Evaluation Framework, and identify elements of the concepts that could be incorporated into a Preferred Growth Concept at the next stage of the Integrated Growth Management Strategy.

*Employment Conversions:*

The *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* identifies Regional staff’s initial assessment of the employment conversion requests received through the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process. Conversions that are identified as supported on the basis of the initial assessment are assumed to be converted in all Growth Concepts and are intended to be implemented through the Initial Scoped Regional Urban Structure ROPA or as part of the Preferred Growth Concept, subject to further consultation. There are other potential conversions that are more significant in scale and impact that are tested in certain Growth Concepts, such as the southern portion of the Milton Education Village and Agerton in Milton, as well as a portion of the Bronte GO Major Transit Station Area in Oakville. In addition, there are other conversion requests that require further assessment on their own individual merits as well as requests that are not supported by Regional staff.

**Overview of the Evaluation**

A key component of the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* is the comparative evaluation of the Growth Concepts using the Evaluation Framework endorsed by Regional Council through Report No. PLS41-19, prepared for that purpose, to inform the process of engagement with the public, local

municipalities and other public agencies, leading to the development of a Preferred Growth Concept for Regional Council consideration.

### *Climate Change Lens:*

The Evaluation Framework endorsed by Council, outlined above includes evaluation measures organized by theme, including a theme that specifically addresses climate change. There are measures under the other themes that by their nature are also important in determining how a concept responds to or supports action on climate change. Due to the importance Council and our local municipalities place on addressing climate change, the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper further articulates how measures under each theme inherently provide Climate Change Lens (Appendix A to the Discussion Paper). It is these measures collectively that help comparatively assess how each growth concept addresses resiliency in response to climate change.

Organized by the themes of the Evaluation Framework, an overview of the findings of the evaluation are:

### **Theme 1 – Regional Urban Structure and Local Urban Structure:**

- Concepts 1 and 4 better achieve a housing mix balanced between ground-related and apartment housing units, and better protect existing employment areas through minimizing employment land conversions
- All four Concepts implement the local urban structures to the extent possible to the 2051 planning horizon, in the context of overall Region-wide objectives.

### **Theme 2 – Infrastructure and Financing:**

- From a transportation infrastructure perspective, no one Growth Concept is preferred, although Concepts 3 and 4 exhibit marginally higher transportation capital costs.
- From a water/wastewater infrastructure perspective, Concept 3 has greater potential to optimize the use of existing infrastructure due to a higher intensification rate, and there is a minor cost differential in favour of Concept 3 with respect to water/wastewater capital costs.
- From a fiscal impact perspective, there is little variation in the concepts, with Concepts 1 and 4 having a slightly more favourable Regional financial impact due to higher value assessment growth associated with ground-related housing. However, higher rates of intensification would likely result in changes to apartment units to accommodate families and could increase the assessment for those units.



### **Theme 3 - Agriculture, Environment and Climate Change:**

- From an agriculture perspective, Concept 3 retains the most prime agricultural land, and best maximizes the amount of agricultural land to support agricultural system.
- From a climate change perspective, Concept 3 best provides opportunities for reducing carbon emissions through provision of transit infrastructure and access to multi-modal transportation.
- Concept 3 best limits impacts on mineral aggregate resource areas.
- All four concepts protect the proposed Regional Natural Heritage System and achieve the measures of the Evaluation Framework. However, certain locations for settlement boundary expansion may result in greater fragmentation or potential adjacency impacts on the natural heritage system, which will be examined at the Preferred Growth Concept stage.

### **Theme 4 – Growing the Economy and Moving People and Goods:**

- All concepts provide opportunities for connectivity of future development and the Region's transportation network, and goods movement relative to the location of employment areas.

Overall, minimizing the expansion of settlement areas best achieves many of the measures in the Evaluation Framework. However, it is important for Regional Council to understand that minimizing settlement area expansion results in a significant shift in the future housing mix of the Region to predominantly apartment dwellings (i.e. 80% apartments in the case of Concept 3), thereby affecting other growth management objectives, such as providing a full range and mix of housing.

### ***Key Considerations for the Preferred Growth Concept***

The *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* (Attachment #5) concludes with a series of key considerations or questions which need to be addressed as part of the IGMS process. These questions flow from the findings of the evaluation, and are intended to provide a 'road map' to the development of a Preferred Growth Concept at the next stage of the IGMS.

The questions are organized by the themes of: growth management, infrastructure, fiscal impact assessment, agriculture, mineral aggregates, climate change, natural heritage systems and healthy watersheds, and multi-modal transportation, transit-supportive densities, and goods movement.

## **North Aldershot Policy Area**

Report No. LPS41-19 –“Regional Official Plan Review – Progress Update on the Integrated Growth Management Strategy and Preliminary Growth Scenarios” noted that, “*Potential development in the North Aldershot area has not been included in the urban supply for the scenarios at this time. Should the conclusions of the current analysis of North Aldershot indicate future development approvals (as discussed elsewhere in the report), units would be incorporated in the Preferred Growth Concept as either rural communities or new DGA, as appropriate.*” Similarly, the North Aldershot Policy Area of the City of Burlington was not included in any of the four Growth Concepts, as the magnitude of growth that can be accommodated is not significant at a Regional scale. Any consideration of a settlement boundary expansion to include the North Aldershot Policy Area should occur through the Integrated Growth Management Strategy process (i.e. municipal comprehensive review) and must address key considerations for urban expansions.

Appendix J to the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* contains a memorandum that provides a conclusion that expanding the urban area into the North Aldershot Policy Area as a whole is not supportable given the overriding policy considerations of the Growth Plan, 2019. In particular the majority of North Aldershot is not suitable for urban development primarily given the following:

- the prevalence of significant and sensitive natural heritage features and functions provide significant limitations on lands available for future urban development;
- the challenge of optimizing major infrastructure investment to service a very limited quantity of dispersed pockets of developable land given the natural constraints (see technical memo identifying challenges related to providing water and wastewater servicing infrastructure to the North Aldershot Policy Area); and
- the challenge of achieving a complete community through more compact urban form, limited opportunities for a complete range and mix of housing, including affordable housing;

The Growth Concepts as profiled in the attachments do not include consideration for urban growth in the North Aldershot Policy Area. Through Phase 3 of the Regional Official Plan Review, the application of a ‘rural’ land use designation (which applies to lands outside both urban areas and prime agricultural areas) and appropriate policies are proposed to be developed for the North Aldershot Policy Area as a whole, building on the issues explored in the North Aldershot Policy Area Discussion Paper (July 2020).

Existing, historical development approvals will be taken into consideration in the North Aldershot Policy Area, as well as the potential for redevelopment or intensification in areas that are contiguous to the existing settlement boundary and exhibit some potential for meeting the policy tests of the Growth Plan and the Regional Official Plan, such as feasibility of servicing, protection of the natural heritage system and water resources, and financial viability.

## Engagement Approach for the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper

Engagement for the Regional Official Plan Review will continue to be undertaken consistent with the Council endorsed Public Communication and Engagement Strategy (Report No. LPS44-17). Some adjustments were required to respond to COVID-19 and public health guidelines. Successful online Public Information Centres were hosted in September 2020 on the previous Discussion Papers. Similarly, for the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* staff will be conducting the majority of engagement online. A 100-day consultation period will take place concluding at the end of May 2021 and will include:

- 2 Public Information Centres, which will be held virtually, but following the same outline as a traditional Public Information Centre (PIC) with an introduction, staff presentation and question/answer session. A technical moderator and a process facilitator will be utilized. People who do not have access to the virtual meeting because they do not have the technology, are not comfortable with the technology, or have accessibility issues will be accommodated;
- PIC meeting materials and questions, which will be posted on [halton.ca/ropr](http://halton.ca/ropr) to allow people to provide input and comments after the sessions, and for reference for those not able to attend the virtual PICs;
- The *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* and Landing Page will be posted on [halton.ca/ropr](http://halton.ca/ropr).
- Participants will be able to provide their responses to questions posed and/or general comments using an online survey tool;
- Presentations to Local Municipal Councils on the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper*;
- Virtual meetings with relevant Advisory Committees;
- Virtual stakeholder meetings;
- Indigenous people's engagement undertaken consistent with the preferred methods of Halton's neighbouring First Nations and Indigenous Communities; and,
- Receipt of comments to the Regional Official Plan email account at [ropr@halton.ca](mailto:ropr@halton.ca).

Public notification of these engagement opportunities will be promoted through the Region's website, newspaper advertisements, signboards, mailing lists, social media, stakeholder groups, and other means.

The engagement plan will need to evolve and adjustments will be made should there be any subsequent changes to COVID-19 restrictions.

The *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* engagement within the context of the broader Regional Official Plan Review engagement process is shown graphically in Attachment #3.

### **Next Steps**

Upon release of the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* and Landing Page, all input received through public engagement will be recorded, responded to, and presented to Regional Council in a Consultation Summary Report. The input related to the *Integrated Growth Management Strategy: Growth Concepts Discussion Paper* will be used to assist in developing a Preferred Growth Concept scheduled to be brought forward for Regional Council consideration following the engagement window.

There will be additional opportunities for public engagement throughout the Regional Official Plan Amendment process in Phase 3 of the Regional Official Plan Review in the fall of 2021. Phase 3 will involve drafting and finalizing the Regional Official Plan Amendment.

FINANCIAL/PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

The current approved budget for T8021D (Regional Official Plan Update) includes sufficient funding to facilitate the Regional Official Plan Review.

Respectfully submitted,



Curt Benson  
Director, Planning Services and Chief  
Planning Official



Bob Gray  
Commissioner, Legislative and Planning  
Services and Corporate Counsel

Approved by



Jane MacCaskill  
Chief Administrative Officer

If you have any questions on the content of this report,  
please contact:

Curt Benson

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Attachments: Attachment #1 – Executive Summary of the Growth Concepts Discussion Paper  
Attachment #2 – Growth Concepts Landing Page  
Attachment #3 – Timeline of the relationship of Integrated Growth Management Strategy  
to the Scoped Regional Urban Structure amendment to the Regional Official Plan  
Attachment #4 – Growth Concepts Evaluation Summary (Appendix K)  
Attachment #5 – Integrated Growth Management Strategy; Growth Concepts Discussion  
Paper and Appendices A to K (Under Separate Cover)