

## Briefing Note: Council Workshop on Employment Lands

### 1. Workshop Purpose

- Present the context of employment land planning including the Provincial planning context.
- Discuss findings from consultant's work.
- Facilitate a collective discussion with Council.
- Obtain feedback from Council to inform the Official Plan Review.
- Provide discussion on potential policy directions which could become elements of a long term strategy for employment lands.

### 2. Employment Lands: Planning Context

- The *Planning Act* identifies planning for employment lands as a matter of provincial interest. The *Planning Act*, the Provincial Policy Statement, and the Growth Plan all give direction on employment lands planning.
- A healthy community has a high employment rate. As the strategic plan notes, the City of Burlington will strive to increase the number of people both living and working here.
- The fundamental considerations of employment land planning:
  - Support prosperity by ensuring adequate supply of land that can accommodate diverse employment uses over the forecast period and beyond
  - Address issues of land use compatibility by managing potential adverse impacts of employment uses on sensitive uses and inversely, protecting employment uses from the intrusion of sensitive land uses which could limit their viability
  - Recognize the importance of major infrastructure to optimize goods movement.
  - Balance of jobs and people in the municipality.
  - Ensure competitive positioning in a regional and global market

### 3. Potential Policy Directions

Below staff have synthesized potential policy directions based on the recommendations and findings of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Employment Lands Studies prepared as part of the Official Plan Review and feedback received from stakeholder engagement conducted to date. Staff will consider Council's comments in refining and recommending proposed policy directions for approval by Council.

## A. Strengthen the policy framework to fully utilize the employment generation and economic potential of the employment lands

**Issue:** The City has a finite supply of designated employment lands and it is critical that the City adopt a policy framework which protects its supply from unwarranted conversion. There is a sufficient supply to meet the Region's 20 year growth projections for the City and the supply will be needed for the long term. Protecting the designated supply of employment lands is one way in which the City and Burlington Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) can demonstrate willingness to be proactive in promoting economic development and attracting employment growth. By maintaining a supply of employment lands that not only is adequate but also can accommodate diverse employment uses by providing a range of locations and parcel sizes, the City can demonstrate this commitment. There is pressure for conversion of employment lands. Nearly all of the City's employment lands are of strategic importance. The City must evaluate conversion requests in the context of a municipal comprehensive review.

### Status:

- The existing Official Plan Policy sets out a number of employment land objectives. One key objective relates to the nature of the supply of employment lands, namely: "To maintain a sufficient supply of lands ... to meet the anticipated needs, including an adequate supply of serviced land and an allowance for choice in terms of location, size of property and servicing needs. It is the general intent of this Plan that this supply shall not be reduced through re-designation of employment lands to permit non-employment purposes."
- The Official Plan currently includes employment conversion policies. Modifications to the existing employment conversion policies were endorsed by Council for consultation in January, 2013. Comments on the proposed modifications were collected through key stakeholder consultation. Responses to comments and, if required, modifications to the employment conversion policies will be presented in a future directions report.
- The site by site analysis performed in the Phase 2 Employment Lands Study provides details of the City's existing vacant employment lands supply.
- Planning will be bringing forward an approach for the assessment of Employment Land Conversion request to occur through a municipal comprehensive review<sup>1</sup>. While this work constitutes the City of Burlington's municipal comprehensive review, the Region of Halton identifies employment lands of

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<sup>1</sup> Municipal Comprehensive Review is defined by the Growth Plan as "An official plan review, or an official plan amendment, initiated by a municipality that comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of this Plan."

regional importance and any request for conversion of lands in those identified lands will require discussion with the Region. The process must be fair, clear and comprehensive.

## **B. Build a strategy to promote office development in the Mobility Hubs and the Urban Growth Centre.**

**Issue:** Currently, there are a limited number of vacant employment sites capable of developing into vibrant, transit supportive mixed use employment nodes in the City. This discussion will be influenced by the other major studies that form part of the Official Plan Review, namely the Mobility Hubs Opportunities and Constraints Study and the Commercial Strategy Study. In order to attract high-rise office development and other compatible employment uses, public investment will be required to leverage and distinguish these unique areas in the City. A strategy that addresses market opportunities, infrastructure requirements, design considerations and implementation measures will be required to promote and attract office development within Mobility Hubs/Major Transit Station Areas and the Urban Growth Centre.

### **Status:**

- The Official Plan already identifies the Urban Growth Centre as an important place for the accommodation of employment.
- Currently, the Official Plan neither includes language recognizing the Mobility Hub concept nor up to date supportive language related to Major Transit Station Areas.
- Municipalities in Ontario have limited tools to ensure that planned mixed use areas actually deliver a mix of uses including a wide range of high quality employment type uses. It will be critical to highlight the range of tools with the potential to ensure a true mix of places to live, work, play, learn and shop in these mixed use areas, particularly in those areas which will see significant change over the planning period.
- The market, on its own, is unlikely to bring these desired uses to these important areas of the City.

## **C. Leverage existing assets and work closely with BEDC to build a proactive approach to economic development.**

**Issue:** Work on the Employment Lands Study has provided an opportunity to align multiple departments within the City of Burlington to proactively promote economic development within the City. Coordination is required to ensure that barriers to investment are minimized. In addition the development of marketing and investment packages and information about the nature of the employment lands supply will also support economic development. As the structure of BEDC evolves, there is a need to continue to build on existing relationships and information.

**Status:**

- In practice, Planning and Building and BEDC work together on a number of projects.
- Strategic employment areas identified in the BEDC Employment Lands Operational Plan were mapped and analyzed in the Phase 2 Employment Lands Study.
- The site by site analysis performed in the Phase 2 Employment Lands Study provides details of the City's existing vacant employment lands supply which may assist in the development of marketing and investment packages.

**D. Implement brownfield redevelopment program.**

**Consider preparing community improvement plans for some employment areas.**

**Issue:** While the findings of the Phase 2 Employment Lands Study indicate that the City's current vacant employment land inventory is likely not facing contamination issues it is recognized that with the anticipated shift to intensification and redevelopment of existing occupied employment lands over the planning period, contamination issues may become a challenge. In order to support general employment land redevelopment and intensification over the long term new approaches need to be considered. With the increasing focus on redevelopment and the potential for intensification on employment lands, the City should be proactive in the development of a brownfield redevelopment program to reduce any barriers to their successful redevelopment.

**Status:**

- The Official Plan already includes policy enabling the development of Community Improvement Plans. Policy states that Community Improvement Plans "shall be prepared and adopted to stimulate private investment and to ensure the effectiveness of public expenditure".
- The Official Plan did not direct that specific CIPs be undertaken. Although the policies have been in place since the last Official Plan Review they have not been employed.
- The current policies include a number of objectives; however the current list of objectives does not identify the importance of redevelopment of employment lands for employment purposes.
- The policies speak to a number of criteria for designation of Community Improvement Areas including "known or perceived environmental contamination".
- The Official Plan currently includes a section called Contaminated and Potentially Contaminated Site related to a range of issues including mitigating potential adverse effects.

- The Official Plan currently defines Brownfield Site as “an undeveloped or previously developed property that may be contaminated. Brownfield sites are usually, but not exclusively, former industrial or commercial properties that may be underutilized, derelict or vacant.”
- Burlington Economic Development Corporation has completed background work:
  - **City of Burlington: Brownfield Remediation Assistance Program Community Improvement Plan**, February 2010, prepared by MMM Group and MKI.

## **E. Work with the Region of Halton to track alignment of growth with Best Planning Estimates (BPEs).**

**Issue:** The best planning estimates have identified where employment growth is expected in the City of Burlington. It is unclear how well the BPEs have identified areas where employment growth will occur in the City.

### **Status:**

- Staff from the City of Burlington participated in the development of the BPEs. There are, and will continue to be, opportunities to learn more about how and where employment is developed in the City. Data is important to ensure alignment of growth with the capital planning program at the Region.
- The Region of Halton has been developing an Employment Survey to obtain yearly data about employment throughout the Region. Continued use of this data and the identification of trends in the City and across the Region will be important at the time of the next Official Plan Review.
- The Official Plan currently includes monitoring policies. There are limited monitoring policies specific to employment lands. A comprehensive program of reporting on findings has not yet been implemented.

## **F. Develop a phasing strategy for the City's un-serviced lands. Consider developing secondary plans for larger greenfield areas. Continue dialog with local utilities.**

**Issue:** There are important areas of the City's employment lands that are not currently serviced. The costs of developing major supportive infrastructure, particularly if that infrastructure is being pursued out of the order identified in Regional Capital Master Planning, have the potential to be significant. A strategy to prioritize secondary planning, direct the development of other strategies including collaboration with the Region and other utility providers, and identify means of providing public investment to spur private investment will be required.

**Status:**

- The Official Plan currently includes a section on the Phasing of Development in the Functional policies. This section emphasizes the need for services to achieve the City's development objectives. The objectives highlight providing municipal services to meet future needs efficiently and economically, based on the financial capability of the City and Region to provide services and identifies and the importance of coordination of the provision of that infrastructure.
- The policies in the Phasing of Development section relate specifically to the Alton Community Development phasing. There is opportunity to refocus these policies from a Greenfield planning context to a redevelopment and intensification planning context.
- The Phase 2 work recognizes that all of the lands within the inventory are planned to be serviced by the Region. The City must continue to actively pursue opportunities to participate in the development of servicing master plans and align City and Regional investment in infrastructure.
- The Province and the Region encourage the designation and preservation of employment areas in the vicinity of major highway interchanges however the documented challenges in redevelopment and reinvestment need to be addressed through planning and coordination with all departments of the City, agencies, the Region of Halton and the Province. Efforts across all departments of the City are currently underway.
- The existing Official Plan includes Functional policies related to utilities but does not currently include consideration of municipal services provided by the Region of Halton such as water and wastewater.

**G. Investigate opportunities for limiting the amount or type of institutional uses on serviced employment lands.**

**Issue:** The Phase 2 report included a review of institutional policy in GTA municipalities. The Region of Halton Official Plan (ROPA #38) included direction to refine the City's existing approaches to institutional use permissions on employment lands.

**Status:**

- Current policy is permissive and flexible as described in the Places of Worship Policy Review Report ([PB-74-11](#)). Institutional uses are permitted in all urban designations (except Greenlands and Watercourses).

- Within Business Corridor, General Employment and Mixed Use Employment designations, certain sensitive institutional uses require an amendment to the Zoning By-law contingent on the completion of a risk assessment report.
- Risk assessment reports are currently identified in policy as a tool to determine any existing or potential sources of hazard from existing industrial uses in the vicinity and whether the levels of risk can be reduced to acceptable levels.
- The Region of Halton is currently developing guidelines to support ROPA #38 policies related to land use compatibility.

## **H. Prepare a comprehensive strategy for employment land intensification.**

**Issue:** Forecasts and assumptions about the potential for employment lands intensification are very difficult to characterize. The Phase 2 report provides the following:

It is difficult to estimate due to a range of factors, including but not limited to:

- Employment levels on individual sites (manufacturing) decline over time as businesses adopt new technologies and outsource aspects of production.
- Traditionally employment land uses are typically space extensive with low building to lot coverage ratios. Employment lands intensification cannot be as easily predicted as residential intensification where the physical conditions of the site tend to indicate where and when intensification will occur.
- A formal calculation would require a detailed study which examines historic rates, market potential and physical opportunities.

Land budgets and the consideration of supply and demand do not include opportunities for redevelopment and on-site intensification of existing established employment areas. The land budget work considers only infill development on existing vacant employment lands.

### **Status:**

- The existing Official Plan Monitoring policies currently identify the general need to monitor employment and population target.
- Burlington Economic Development Corporation is investing in study of the barriers to investment and reinvestment in employment areas. Information about where public investment is required to

facilitate reinvestment can be used to inform such a strategy. The basis for a comprehensive strategy is established in the Official Plan and resourced through work being undertaken by BEDC.

- The Official Plan Review through the major studies, as discussed above, will identify those areas of the City which have the potential to develop more intense high quality employment uses in key mixed use areas like the Urban Growth Centre and the Mobility Hub areas.

## **I. Clarify the intent and definition of Employment Lands and area of employment in the policies and schedules of the Official Plan.**

**Issue:** Area of Employment is a defined term in the *Planning Act*. The purpose of the definition is to clarify what constitutes the characteristics of, and uses included in an area of employment. The Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan both define “Employment Area” to reflect the *Planning Act* definition of area of employment. The purpose of the definition of Area of Employment in the *Planning Act* is to strengthen municipal control over these lands. The Region of Halton has defined regionally significant area of employment through mapping through ROPA #38. The City of Burlington must carefully consider the Region’s area of employment and the City’s existing policies, definitions and mapping to clarify the geographic extent of locally significant employment areas.

### **Status:**

- The Region provides a general definition of Employment Area, and uses an overlay on Map 1 Regional Structure called “Employment Area”.
- The existing Official Plan currently maps “Employment Lands” and defines Areas of Employment in slightly different ways.
- While the geographic extent of Employment Area in the Regional Plan and in the City’s Official Plan do not need to match, the City’s Official Plan must include those lands identified by the Region as Employment Area. The City can then determine what additional lands should be considered locally important Employment Area in the context of the City’s Official Plan.
- The Region’s mapping and the City’s mapping and definition include some inconsistencies that will be discussed with the Region.

## **J. Retain and, where applicable, refine existing Employment Land Use Designations**

**Issue:** In the City-wide context, no new employment lands use designations will be proposed. That being said the findings of the other major consultant led studies could identify the need to propose new approaches to employment adjacent to and within key intensification areas.

## Status:

- The existing employment lands designations are quite permissive and appear to permit an appropriate range and mix of employment uses. The existing Official Plan policies related to employment lands address a range of important issues.
- The Mixed Use-Corridor Employment designation as written in the existing Official Plan may not develop to include an employment function.
- The findings of the other major consultant led studies will emphasize the need to develop enhanced policies related to encouraging dense, transit supportive, well designed employment uses in key intensification areas.

## 4. Next Steps

Staff will be using the discussion with Council and the findings of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 to:

- Design a process to assist Staff in providing recommendations and support Council in decision-making related to the assessment of Employment Land Conversion Requests (2014).
- Bring forward additional employment lands policy directions, which will complement the employment conversion policy directions previously endorsed for public consultation by Council on January 28, 2013 and complete the suite of employment lands policy directions as part of the current Official Plan Review (2014);
- Conduct the Employment Land Conversion Request Assessment process which will consider the conversion requests received by proponents, as well as other areas identified by the City for potential conversion(2014-2015);
- Report the findings of the Employment Land Conversion Request Assessment back to Council (2015); and
- Report on all proposed amendments to the Official Plan and specifically amendments to the urban structure, inclusive of employment lands, upon the conclusion of the municipal comprehensive review (2015).

### **In preparation for Council Workshop on Employment Lands on May 6**

- Please review this briefing note and consider the Potential Policy Directions presented in Section 3. This document will be a useful primer for the discussion. Staff is available to address technical questions in advance or following the Workshop.

# We're Growing in Place [ Burlington's Official Plan Review ]

- Although not required reading, the attached article may be of interest: “A Global Perspective on Competition & the Framework for Employment Lands Planning” by Paddy Kennedy.
- If you have questions or areas of interest that you would like to highlight in advance of the session please call or email Alison Enns (ext. 7787).

**Appendix 1:** “A Global Perspective on Competition & the Framework for Employment Lands Planning” by Paddy Kennedy submitted the Ontario Professional Planners Institute: Ontario Planning Journal

**Links to Additional Information:**

For general reference please find links below to staff reports:

Committee Date	Council Date	Report Details
June 20, 2011 (CDC)	July 7, 2011	PB-37-11: <a href="#">Burlington Employment Lands Study, 2011</a> . Under separate cover: <a href="#">Burlington Employment Lands Study, 2011</a>
December 3, 2012 (CDC)	December 10, 2012	PB-101-12: <a href="#">Draft Employment Lands Study, Phase 2</a> Appendix A: <a href="#">Vacant Employment Lands identified in the Employment Lands Study, 2011</a>  Under separate cover: Employment Lands Study, Phase 2 Draft Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Study Part 1</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Study Part 2</a></li> </ul>
January 14, 2013 (D&I)	January 28, 2013	PB-17-13: <a href="#">Official Plan Review: Directions Report on the Draft Employment Land Conversion Policies; and, Proposed Strategic Assessment of Vacant Employment Land Inventory</a> Appendix A: <a href="#">Existing Official Plan Policies- Employment Lands Part III, Section 3.0</a> Appendix B: <a href="#">Draft Official Plan Employment Land Conversion Policies</a> Appendix C: <a href="#">Draft Official Plan Employment Land Conversion Policies showing modifications.</a> Appendix D: <a href="#">Comparison between existing and draft employment Land Conversion Policies.</a> <a href="#">Site Visit Notes</a>
March 24, 2014 (D&I)	April 7, 2014	PB-17-14: Report providing information on the Official Plan Review: Transmittal of Final Phase 2 Employment Lands Study <a href="#">Click here to access the staff report and appendices.</a>