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LAND BUDGET AND URBAN BOUNDARY EXPANSION: REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated March 16, 2009, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council receive the York Region Land Budget and Urban Boundary Expansion Report and *Attachments 1-3* for information purposes.
2. Staff consult further with the local municipalities regarding urban boundary expansions for the update of the Regional Official Plan.
3. Planning Department staff circulate this report to all local municipalities, the development community, Regional partners and stakeholders, the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for comment and discussion.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides an overview of the Region's land budget and urban boundary expansion implications and provides a basis for further discussions with local municipal staff and key stakeholders. In order to conform to the provincial *Growth Plan*, the Region will require an urban boundary expansion into all three Whitebelt areas. These boundary expansions are required in order to meet the Region's updated 2031 population and employment forecasts of 1.5 million people and 799,000 jobs.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region is in the process of bringing its Official Plan into conformity with the Growth Plan

The Province of Ontario released the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) – *Places to Grow* in 2006. Municipalities throughout the GGH are required to bring their respective official plans into conformity with the *Growth Plan* by June 2009.

The Region is close to completing its 'Planning for Tomorrow' exercise that is an important component of York Region's overall conformity work. To date, through the 'Planning for Tomorrow' initiative, regional staff have brought forward to Planning Committee reports dealing with:

- Phases I to III of the public consultation exercise
- 2031 population and employment forecasts (January – endorsed by Committee and Council)
- 2031 land requirements (January – endorsed by Committee and Council)
- Regional Intensification Strategy (February – endorsed by Committee and Council)
- Wellhead Protection Area Policies and Mapping (March - endorsed by Committee and Council)
- New criteria for building communities (March - endorsed by Committee and Council)
- Natural Heritage System – (April Committee)
- Centres and Corridors Policy Criteria - (April Committee)

Further reports outlining infrastructure master plan updates for transportation, sewer and water, natural heritage trails, agriculture review and a 25 year fiscal impact analysis will be forthcoming over the next few months leading to a draft of an updated Regional Official Plan that can be released by Council for public review in June 2009.

Regional Council previously dealt with reports on the Region's updated forecasts and land requirements to 2031

The York Region 2031 Land Budget report presented to Planning Committee in January 2009 detailed the Region's residential and employment land requirements to 2031 and provided an analysis of the Region's ability to achieve the *Growth Plan's* Designated Greenfield density target of 50 people and jobs per hectare. An urban boundary expansion is required to accommodate the forecasted growth in York Region.

This report provides a brief overview of the Region's 2031 land budget and urban boundary expansion implications and provides a basis for further discussions with local municipal staff and key stakeholders. The Region will be proceeding with an urban boundary expansion into the Whitebelt in order to accommodate the forecast population and employment growth to 2031.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Land Budget work completed as part of municipal comprehensive review and conformity exercise

York Region's forecast anticipates 1.5 million people, 510,000 households and 799,000 jobs by 2031. This represents growth of 577,000 people, 234,000 households and

336,000 jobs from 2006 to 2031. To accommodate this growth, the Region is advocating boundary expansions in the three Whitebelt areas of Markham, Vaughan and East Gwillimbury that are carefully phased and sequenced.

In considering the need for an urban boundary expansion, the Region undertook a detailed municipal comprehensive review that included:

- The completion of an intensification strategy that identified a minimum 40% residential intensification target between 2015 to 2031, and planned for a significant portion of future population and employment growth within the Built-up Areas. Intensification varies from municipality to municipality with targets for some municipalities greater than 40% (i.e. Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill)
- An assessment of the available residential and employment land supplies and demonstration of the need for a proposed urban expansion, and
- A demonstration of how the *Growth Plan's* minimum Designated Greenfield area density target of 50 people and jobs per hectare is to be achieved.

Table 1 below highlights the Region's ground-related housing supply based on a forecast scenario demand, as well as a 10 year historical average completion rate from CMHC. There is significant variation of residential supply between the southern three municipalities of Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan and the municipalities north of the Oak Ridges Moraine. The current ground-related supply ranges from 5 to 11.5 years in southern York Region and from 19 to 26 years in northern York Region.

Table 1
York Region Residential Forecast Supply Analysis

Supply Detail	Unit Supply 2008	Current Years Supply Forecast Demand	Historical Demand ¹
Total Ground-Related Supply ²	87,900	14.5	9.0
Southern York Region ³	44,400	11.5	5.3
Northern York Region ⁴	43,500	18.9	25.9

Source: York Region Planning & Development Services Department, 2008.

¹Based on 10-year average Canadian Mortgage and Housing Completion Rates

²Ground-related supply includes singles, semis and rows

³Southern municipalities include Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan

⁴Northern municipalities include Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville

York Region 2031 Land Budget Highlights

The following observations were identified as part of the Region's land budget analysis and review:

- 90,700 households are required within the Built-up Area of the Region in order to achieve the minimum 40% residential intensification target.
- The Region's four Regional Centres are planned to meet and exceed a target of 200 people and jobs per hectare
- Forty-two percent (42%) of the Region's employment growth is planned to be accommodated within the Region's Built-up Areas.
- A total of 2,837 developable hectares (ha) of land in the Whitebelt are required for residential and employment uses in order to achieve the 2031 forecast. This includes 1,771 ha for community land development (including 296 ha for major retail uses) and 1,066 ha for employment land development.
- Boundary expansions are required in all three Whitebelt areas in East Gwillimbury, Markham and Vaughan. Given that planning approvals for new communities can take up to 10 years or more, it is important to proceed with urban boundary expansions given the risk that the ground-related housing supply could run out in just over five years in southern York Region.
- Community lands (lands for the Region's new communities) in the Whitebelt are planned based on achieving a density of 70 people and jobs per ha. The addition of employment lands (lands for industrial and business park uses) lowers the total to 59 people and jobs per ha. Communities at these densities represent a more compact built form than traditionally built in York Region.
- The overall Greenfield Area Density for York Region is 50 people/jobs per ha, which meets the *Growth Plan* target.

Table 2 below outlines the approximate amount of developable land in the Whitebelt required to accommodate the forecasted population and employment growth to 2031. The Whitebelt land requirements are distributed to the three Whitebelt Areas, based on local municipal forecasts.

Table 2
2031 Total Land Requirements by Land Use and Local Municipality

	Community Lands (ha)	Employment Lands (ha)	Total (ha)
East Gwillimbury	427	87	515
Markham	727	437	1,165
Vaughan	617	541	1,157
Total	1,771	1,066	2,837

Source York Region Planning and Development Services Department, 2009

Regional Official Plan Update to be based on the following key principles.

The updated Regional Official Plan will be based on a number of key principles, each of which will help inform the location, extent and density of growth:

1. The Region is required by Provincial Legislation to bring its Official Plan into Conformity with the *Places to Grow* (2005) Plan no later than June 2009. Included in that conformity exercise is a land budget which defines lands that are required to meet the Population and Employment Forecasts.
2. The Region is advocating boundary expansions in the three whitebelt areas (Markham, Vaughan and East Gwillimbury) that are carefully phased, sequenced to provide for orderly sustainable growth and conform to Provincial and Regional Population and Employment forecasts.
3. The approach to phasing must be flexible and recognize that the pace of ground related demand changes due to market conditions and the design aspect of new communities is evolving.
4. In keeping with the Region's internationally recognized Sustainability Strategy, new communities will be developed using 'triple bottom line' principles incorporating considerations of: environment, economy and healthy communities.
5. Communities built in these areas will be compact, complete and of the highest physical quality. Detailed criteria for the development of these new communities will be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan.
6. The Region is very serious about intensification and City Building within its existing urban areas. Urban expansions will be completed in a careful, considered way to ensure Provincial and Regional intensification targets are met or exceeded. The Regional Intensification Strategy provides a framework of how the Region will meet the intensification targets found in the *Growth Plan*.
7. The creation of a strong linked Natural Heritage system in conformity with the Greenbelt Plan is a primary objective of the Regional Official Plan. The Natural Heritage Strategic Directions Report (PEDC Report No.1, 2008) has helped inform the land budget.
8. The Region has completed a comprehensive three part growth management consultation with the public over a two year period and has carefully listened to issues. It was clear from the public discussions, that boundary expansions must be completed carefully, be phased and integrated with planning for required infrastructure.

New Communities are to be carefully phased and sequenced

There are a number of essential services and programs that make up the fabric of communities ranging from roads and sewers to human service facilities such as schools and day care facilities.

The delivery and timing of all of these services requires the co-ordination of a broad spectrum of agencies and organizations including the Region, local municipalities, school boards, human service providers, environmental groups, emergency services, transit operators, and provincial and federal agencies.

The development of new communities within the Whitebelt needs a collective, co-ordinated, and phased approach to meet York Region's objectives. New communities required by 2031 will be identified and phasing and sequencing policies will be incorporated into the Regional and Local Official Plans to provide for orderly, sustainable growth that responds to the delivery of services optimizing the opportunity for dynamic liveable communities.

As mentioned above, detailed criteria for the development of these new communities will be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan. Urban expansions and the phasing and sequencing of new communities will be completed in a careful, considered way to ensure that the Region's intensification targets are met or exceeded.

For managing the development of new communities in the Region, local municipalities may undertake a conceptual land use plan to 2051, within the framework of the *Growth Plan* and *Greenbelt Plan* policies, which outlines a strategic, integrated framework for sustainable communities. Within this broader 2051 strategic framework, local municipalities would subsequently designate land up to 2031 based on the regional land requirements detailed above.

The development within the designated areas shall be based on a phased approach in order to:

- Allow for better co-ordination amongst relevant agencies and organizations in the planning of new communities.
- Allow for more efficient delivery of hard services and soft services (i.e. human services, schools).
- Allow for the latest design techniques to be implemented.
- Facilitate the timely completion of new communities.
- Allow for more timely expenditures in transit.

Regional staff will be working with local municipal staff and other interested stakeholders in formulating the phasing and sequencing policies to be incorporated into the Regional and Local Official Plans.

An Urban Boundary Expansion will be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan

As Table 3 below illustrates, approximately 40% of the developable area of the Whitebelt will be required to the year 2031. *Attachment 1* illustrates the Whitebelt Areas for each of the three municipalities of East Gwillimbury, Markham and Vaughan and land requirements to 2031. The Region is required by provincial legislation to bring its Official Plan into conformity with the *Places to Grow* Plan no later than June 2009. The Region is advocating boundary expansions into all three whitebelt areas that are carefully phased and sequenced to provide for orderly sustainable growth and conform to Provincial and Regional Population and Employment forecasts. The Regional Official Plan's regional structure map will be updated by June 2009 to illustrate the urban expansion areas.

Table 3
2031 Percent of Total Whitebelt Required by Local Municipality

	Total Developable Whitebelt (ha)	2031 Whitebelt Requirement (ha)	2031 Percent of Total¹
East Gwillimbury	1,802	515	29%
Markham/Whitchurch-Stouffville	2,693	1,165	43%
Vaughan/King	2,576	1,157	45%
Total	7,072	2,837	40%

Source: York Region Planning and Development Services Department, 2008

1. The 2031 percentage for Markham and Vaughan are based on total Whitebelt Area for both Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville and Vaughan and King. The total developable whitebelt area for Markham is 2,354 ha of which 49% is required up to 2031. The total developable whitebelt area for Vaughan is 2,493 ha of which 46% is required up to 2031

The exact location of the urban area expansions need to be discussed with the local municipalities. Discussions will continue over the coming months in order to finalize the locations for both the community lands and employment lands to 2031.

As illustrated in the attached mapping, the development of the Whitebelt lands presents a number of challenges. New communities will be required to be more compact, pedestrian oriented and transit supportive. The amount of land that contains natural features, approximately 44% of all the Whitebelt area, will impact the design of new communities and how major capital infrastructure (roads, water and sewer pipes) is provided.

A number of areas have constraints related to the timing of capital infrastructure. The need and justification and potential location of the GTA West corridor linking highways 400 and 427 in Vaughan has yet to be determined. Until the Province determines whether a GTA West corridor is justified lands within the study area are essentially encumbered and are not readily available for development. Areas in East Gwillimbury are also under short term development constraints awaiting sewer and water infrastructure.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The decisions made around the forecast and land budget and urban boundary expansions will impact every goal area in Vision 2026:

- Quality Communities for a Diverse Population
- Enhanced Environment, Heritage and Culture
- A Vibrant Economy
- Responding to the Needs of Our Residents
- Housing Choices for Our Residents
- Managed and Balanced Growth
- Infrastructure for a Growing Region
- Engaged Communities and a Responsive Region.

Planning new communities in the Whitebelt Areas and development will provide the opportunity to implement each of the goal areas and to achieve our Vision.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial forecasts for the Region are based on the population and employment forecasts and land budget summarized in this report. The urban boundary expansion and forecasted growth for the Region will require investment in transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure and human services. The Region is currently undertaking a detailed fiscal impact assessment and economic implications analysis for the forecast/land budget.

The Region has constructed very significant amounts of water and wastewater infrastructure to service future growth and has debt financed those works that will be recovered from future development charges. It is essential that sufficient land supply be available for development in order to ensure that the Region is able to collect development charges on a timely basis.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The forecasts and land budget exercise were prepared in consultation with local municipalities and agencies. Discussions on the specifics of the urban boundary expansion regarding the location of community lands and employment lands are continuing.

A number of local municipalities are undertaking their own growth management exercises in conjunction with the Region's work. Urban expansions into the Whitebelt will be required in the municipalities of East Gwillimbury, Markham and Vaughan in order to accommodate the forecasted growth. The local municipalities will use the

forecasts, intensification targets and land budget to guide their long term planning initiatives, including growth management studies, capital infrastructure projects and social and health service programs.

7. CONCLUSION

York Region's land budget was prepared in the context of key policies in the *Growth Plan* regarding the protection of the natural environment, the development of more compact transit supportive communities, intensification targets and density targets in urban growth centres and Designated Greenfield Areas. Municipalities are required to conform to the *Growth Plan* by June 2009.

This report provides an overview of the Region's land budget and urban boundary expansion implications and provides a basis for further discussions with local municipal staff and key stakeholders. The Region will be proceeding with an urban boundary expansion into the Whitebelt in order to conform to the *Growth Plan* based on updated 2031 population and employment forecasts of 1.5 million people and 799,000 jobs.

Boundary expansions are required in all three Whitebelt areas in East Gwillimbury, Markham and Vaughan. Given that planning approvals for new communities can take up to 10 years or more, it is important to proceed now with urban boundary expansions given the risk that the ground-related housing supply could run out in just over five years in southern York Region.

A total of 2,837 developable hectares (ha) of land in the Whitebelt are required for residential and employment uses in order to achieve the 2031 forecast. This includes 1,771 ha for community land development (including 296 ha for major retail uses) and 1,066 ha for employment land development.

The exact location of the urban area expansions need to be discussed with the local municipalities. Discussions on the specifics of the urban boundary expansion regarding the location of community lands and employment lands are continuing.

The Region is very serious about intensification and City Building within its existing urban areas. Urban expansions will be completed in a careful, considered way to ensure Provincial and Regional intensification targets are met or exceeded.

The urban boundary expansions will be phased and sequenced to provide for orderly sustainable growth. New communities will be developed based on the Region's Sustainability Strategy, using the 'triple bottom line' principles incorporating considerations of: environment, economy and healthy communities. Detailed criteria for the development of these new communities will be incorporated into the Regional Official Plan.

York Region's forecasting and land budget work is an important component of the Region's municipal comprehensive review being undertaken to conform to the Provincial *Growth Plan*. In addition to forecast and land budget work, the Region's 'Planning for Tomorrow' exercise includes a Regional Intensification Strategy, a comprehensive public consultation exercise, infrastructure master plan updates for transportation, sewer and water, an updated Natural Heritage Strategy and a 25 year fiscal impact analysis.

The results of the Region's municipal comprehensive review will be implemented through the Regional Official Plan process.

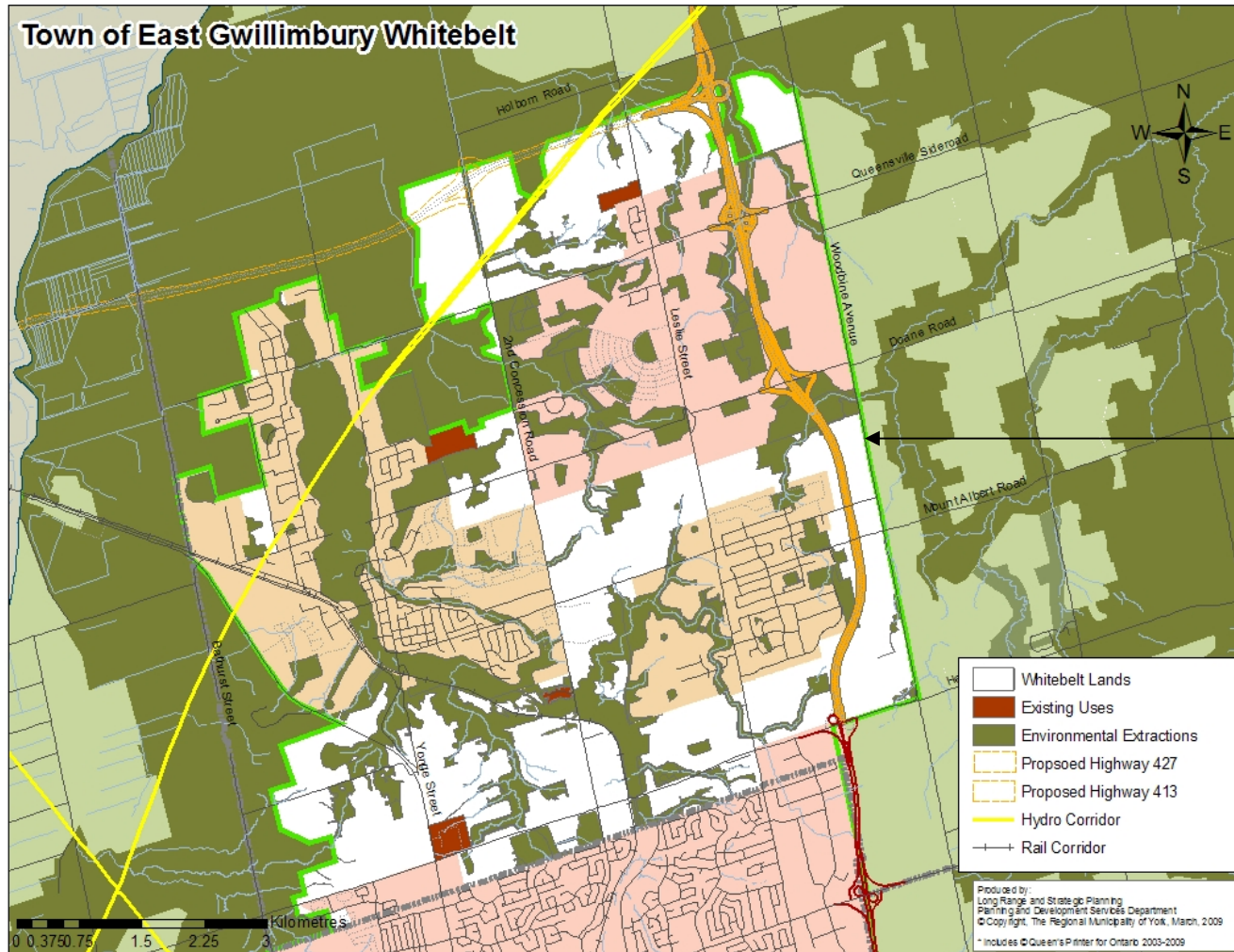
Regional staff intend to present a draft of an updated Regional Official Plan that can be released by Council for public review in June 2009.

For more information on this report, please contact Paul Bottomley, Manager of Growth Management, Economy & Information Research at (905)830-4444 Ext. 1530 or John Waller, Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning at Ext. 1525.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

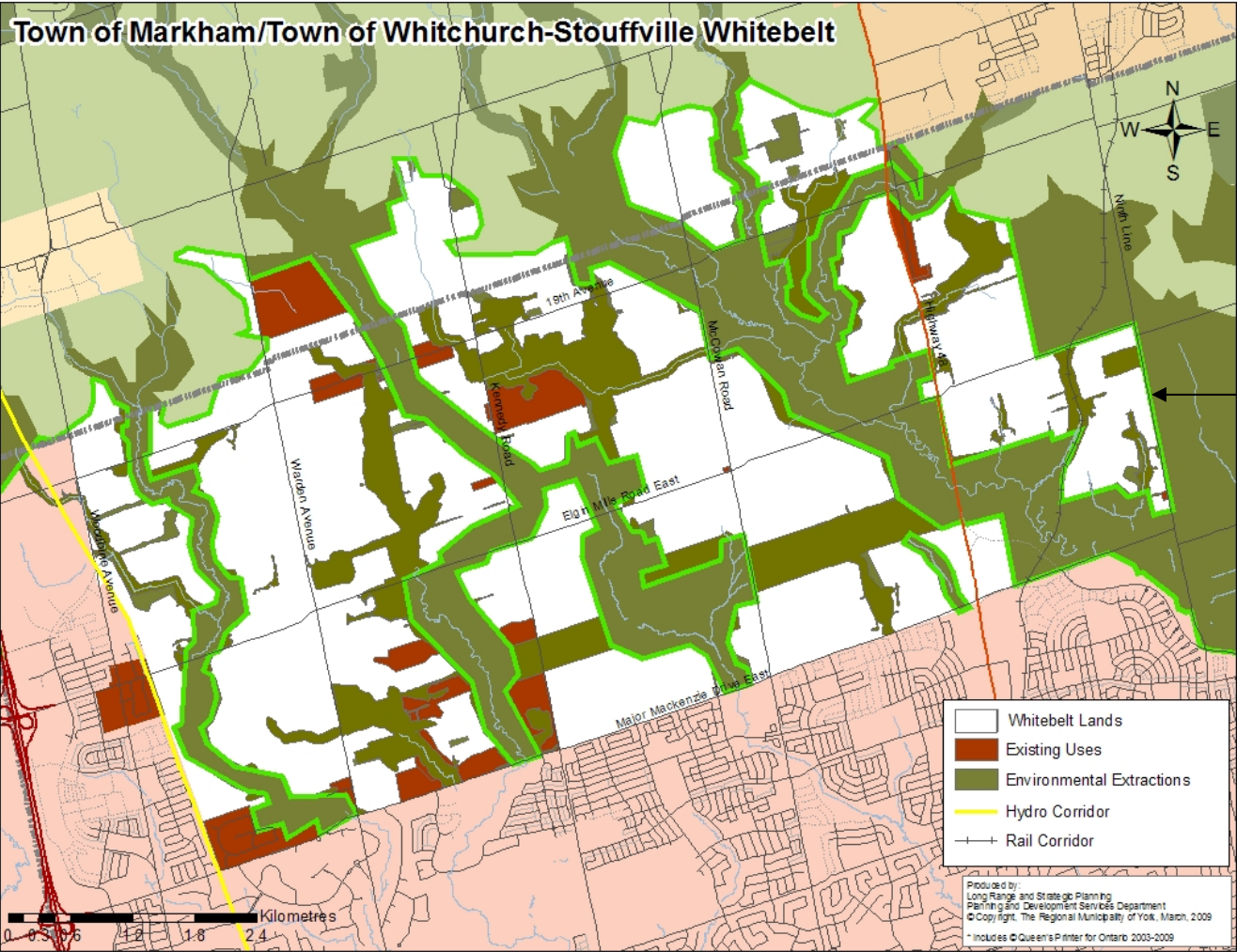
(The three attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)

Town of East Gwillimbury Whitebelt Lands Required up to 2031



Whitebelt Lands	Hectares
Residential Land Required up to 2031	427
Employment Land Required up to 2031	87
Remaining Land	1,288
Total	1,802

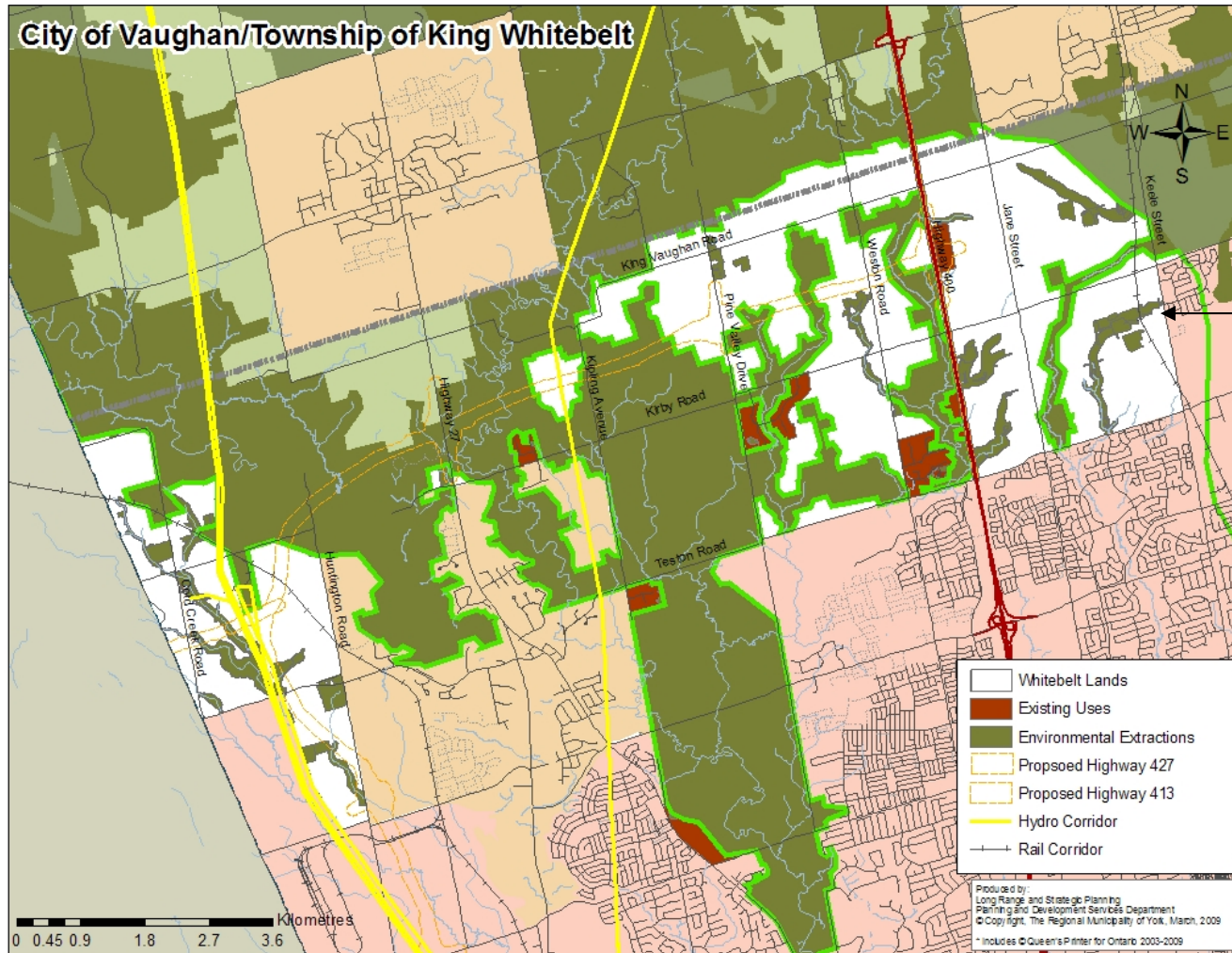
Town of Markham Whitebelt Lands Required up to 2031



Whitebelt Lands	Hectares
Residential Land Required up to 2031 in Markham	727
Employment Land Required up to 2031 in Markham	437
Remaining Whitebelt Lands*	1,529
Total	2,693

*Remaining Whitebelt Lands include 1,190 ha in Markham and 339 ha in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

City of Vaughan Whitebelt Lands Required up to 2031



Whitebelt Lands	Hectares
Residential Land Required up to 2031 in Vaughan	617
Employment Land Required up to 2031 in Vaughan	541
Remaining Whitebelt Lands*	1,418
Total	2,576

*Remaining Whitebelt Lands include 1,335 ha in Vaughan and 83 ha in King.