

East Gwillimbury Official Plan Review:  
Capacity Analysis and Land Needs

Town of East Gwillimbury  
December 2020



# addendum memorandum

**Date:** August 9, 2021

**Project:** East Gwillimbury Official Plan Review - Growth Management

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## Summary

In spite of the changes made to the Regional growth allocations for East Gwillimbury, the conclusions noted in our December 2020 Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Report remain unchanged with respect to the Town's ultimate development capacity.

The Town of East Gwillimbury should play an increasingly important role in York Region in the delivery of new, low-rise housing that is more attainable for a wider range of residents than municipalities to the south. Including the Town's Whitebelt lands within an appropriately defined Settlement Area boundary for consideration for urban development would allow East Gwillimbury to meet its market potential over the planning horizon.

Further, our team also believes that there is a clear and strong planning justification for the inclusion of the Town's Whitebelt lands within the Settlement Area boundary during the planning horizon. The inclusion of these lands, which would help bridge the gap between existing Settlement Areas, would allow for the Town and its infrastructure to be planned comprehensively through to the 2051 planning horizon.

Finally, we believe that the objective of comprehensive land use planning that is fully linked to the provision of major infrastructure is crucial. There are a number of important planned major infrastructure projects that will both attract and facilitate future growth in East Gwillimbury. Adding and incorporating all the Whitebelt lands in the urban boundary now allows the ultimate servicing and infrastructure to be planned and installed in a logical, efficient and cost-effective manner, reducing the risk of incurring additional costs due to infrastructure that needs to be upsized or adjusted at significant cost when the Whitebelt lands are ultimately added in the future.

## 1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this addendum is to respond to the recently released information coming from the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review process as it relates to the December 2020 Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Report prepared by the consulting team for the East Gwillimbury Official Plan Review. York Region is expected to experience steady growth to the year 2051, and East Gwillimbury is well positioned to accommodate a significant part of that growth.

Recent changes to Provincial planning legislation and policy frameworks provide ongoing direction to the Region on matters of growth management and are very specifically intended to support the future development of complete, vibrant and well-connected communities, that include a range of economic opportunities. One of the key principles of the new Provincial planning framework is the provision of a diversity of housing options and, specifically, the promotion of housing affordability. In response to these changes to the Provincial planning policy framework, the Region is currently preparing a Municipal Comprehensive Review to ensure Regional Official Plan conformity with A Place to Grow (August 2020), and it is through that process that East Gwillimbury will be assigned both population and employment growth forecasts to the year 2051.

We believe that it is crucial that the Region allocates growth in a way that is equitable to all of the municipalities within York Region, and that fully considers the growth opportunities within East Gwillimbury.

## 2.0 Future Land Needs and Development Capacity Analysis

Our Official Plan Review team completed a Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Report as part of the Town of East Gwillimbury's Official Plan Review ('OPR') process in December 2020.

The purpose of the December 2020 report was to evaluate the assumptions in York Region's most recent Municipal Comprehensive Review ('MCR') for East Gwillimbury and to evaluate, from a market perspective, the population and jobs that would be required for full build-out of the Town's Whitebelt lands.

As part of our work, we completed two background reports to detail our research and findings – one assessed population and residential growth, the other assessed employment uses. The results of these background reports were utilized to inform the Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Report, which assessed the number of people and jobs necessary to fully build-out the available Greenfield and Whitebelt lands at a density and form considered supportable from a market perspective.

At the time of our report, the Region's most recent MCR had been completed in 2015, with a growth horizon to 2041. The Region had previously allocated a forecast of 104,700 persons and 36,100 jobs to East Gwillimbury to 2041. Our research indicated that the Region's assumptions related to growth and densities to 2041 were reasonable from a market perspective.

Our capacity analysis noted the following totals for full build-out of East Gwillimbury's developable lands, including all Whitebelt land:

- > Total population in the range of 135,000 persons;
- > Total employment base in the range of 55,000 jobs; and,

- > Combined population and jobs in the range of 190,000.

While only 223 hectares of Whitebelt land was deemed to be required to accommodate growth to 2041, given the amount of growth forecast for East Gwillimbury in the decades preceding 2041, we noted in our work that the entirety of the Whitebelt lands could be required in the subsequent decade (2042 to 2051) to accommodate future growth beyond 2041 and allow East Gwillimbury to reach its market potential.

### 3.0 Updated Regional Growth Allocations

After our report was issued in December 2020, York Region released (March 2021) draft growth allocations to 2051 as part of their ongoing Regional MCR.

The growth allocations for East Gwillimbury included a minimal increase from the previous 2041 allocations that were completed as part of the 2015 Regional MCR, in spite of an additional 10 years being added to the growth horizon (Table 1). This includes the following:

- > The 2051 population of 105,100 persons in East Gwillimbury represents an increase of just 400 persons from the previous 2041 growth allocation;
- > Similarly, the 2051 employment allocation of 37,400 jobs in East Gwillimbury represents an increase of just 1,300 jobs from the previous 2041 growth allocation;
- > With close to 1,000 hectares of Whitebelt land available in East Gwillimbury, just 245 hectares have been proposed by the Region for urban expansion to 2051, an increase of only 22 hectares from the previous 2041 growth allocations (223 hectares).

Table 1

<b>Changes to Regional Growth Allocations Town of East Gwillimbury, 2015 and 2021 MCR</b>			
	<b>2031</b>	<b>2041</b>	<b>2051</b>
<b>Population</b>			
2015 MCR	63,600	104,700	-
2021 MCR	59,300	82,000	105,100
<b>Difference:</b>	<b>-4,300</b>	<b>-22,700</b>	-
<b>Employment</b>			
2015 MCR	19,900	36,100	-
2021 MCR	16,800	26,500	37,400
<b>Difference:</b>	<b>-3,100</b>	<b>-9,600</b>	-
<i>Source: York Region</i>			

The reason for the modest growth allocation has largely been attributed to delays to major servicing infrastructure that will be required for East Gwillimbury to be built out to its full potential and utilize the full extent of the Whitebelt lands. Regional funding has yet to be earmarked for the full cost of this infrastructure.

As part of the updated growth allocations, East Gwillimbury's intensification target was reduced from 4% to 3% and density targets were reduced from around 60 persons and jobs per hectare to 55 persons and jobs per hectare. Notwithstanding this, we do not believe that these changes impact the ultimate development capacity of East Gwillimbury on a total persons and jobs basis.

#### **4.0 Impacts on the Town's Official Plan Review Process**

The new densities put forth in the Region's MCR are not unreasonable for the Town of East Gwillimbury. They are within the range of densities that have been seen in other nearby communities that have experienced similar development patterns as to what may be expected in East Gwillimbury.

However, our team believes that these updated densities should be treated as a minimum and that the Town should plan, through the OPR process, for more growth beyond what these densities may accommodate, similar to the persons and jobs totals that were outlined in our 2020 report.

Even if minimum densities are in the 55 persons and jobs per hectare range in the near-term, it is likely that densities will increase over time for the same reasons outlined in our 2020 Capacity Analysis report:

- > Affordability concerns will lead to a shift towards increased densities over time;
- > Townhouses will become more popular over time as an affordable alternative to single-detached homes;
- > Single-detached development is likely to become denser as lot sizes shift downward from 36' to 40' towards 25' to 30', which is already occurring elsewhere in York Region, including in East Gwillimbury to a small degree; and,
- > Some small-scale apartment development may occur as the local population ages and the housing needs of the older population changes.

Notwithstanding the above, we recognize that from the Town of East Gwillimbury's perspective, the issue with the recent growth allocations through the Region's 2021 MCR is less about the changes to densities and more about the amount of growth that has been allocated to the Town – representing a significant difference from the previous MCR.

From a market perspective, we believe that East Gwillimbury has the ability to accommodate significantly more growth between 2021 and 2051 as the required servicing infrastructure is planned and anticipated during the planning horizon.

While municipalities to the south focus on intensification, particularly in the larger centres of Markham and Vaughan, East Gwillimbury will play an increasingly important role in York Region by servicing demand for larger-sized, low-rise residential units. Not only is there an abundance of land available to accommodate this type of new residential development (including the Whitebelt), but East Gwillimbury is also likely to be a market where pricing for new housing is going to be more attainable relative to the municipalities in the southern part of the Region.

However, if additional Whitebelt lands are not included as part of urban expansion to 2051, the amount of new growth that East Gwillimbury can accommodate will be limited primarily to the existing designated greenfield area and would have market implications within the Town and elsewhere in the Region. If low-rise residential supply is restricted, pricing would be expected to rise at a faster rate throughout the Region, including in East Gwillimbury, putting low-rise housing out of reach of a growing portion of the population. It is highly unlikely that the East Gwillimbury market will support any significant level of intensification and apartment development to make up for a lack of low-rise housing supply.

## 5.0 Core Considerations

To further articulate the basis of our Capacity Analysis, the following more detailed commentary is provided on a number of key topics:

### 5.1 The Planning Horizon

A Place to Grow (August 2020) now establishes a planning horizon to the year 2051. Further, within that planning horizon, the Province has allocated significant population and employment growth to York Region. It is now the responsibility of the Region to allocate the Provincial growth projections to its constituent municipalities in a way that:

- > Is equitable to all of the municipalities;
- > Recognizes local opportunities and constraints; and,
- > Is linked to the related achievement of a long-term urban structure, as well as planned and required major infrastructure investments.

We believe that there is a substantial opportunity within East Gwillimbury to continue to develop both its Designated Greenfield Areas, as well as the entirety of the identified Whitebelt lands within the 2051 planning horizon. The Capacity Analysis articulated earlier in this letter is based upon:

- > Clear Council direction from the Town of East Gwillimbury to plan for the full build-out of the Whitebelt in East Gwillimbury;
- > The broad application of the policies of A Place to Grow (August 2020); and,
- > Our understanding of the local East Gwillimbury development context.

## **5.2 The Evolving Urban Structure**

There are illogical and non-developable gaps between and among the defined Settlement Areas of Sharon, Holland Landing and Queensville. Planning for a complete, vibrant and well-connected Town is negatively impacted by the current Settlement Area boundaries and Whitebelt gaps which are separating key community areas from the necessary community facilities and municipal infrastructure.

Key areas within the communities of Sharon, Holland Landing, and Queensville, as well as prime development areas near the Regional Corridor of Green Lane which are not currently developable, are identified as Whitebelt, significantly hindering the Town's ability to comprehensively plan for a complete, vibrant and well-connected Town.

## **5.3 Incremental Settlement Area Expansions**

From a pragmatic perspective, and in accordance with A Place to Grow (August 2020), Settlement Area Boundary Expansions of up to 40 hectares per application are now permitted to be considered outside of the Municipal Comprehensive Review process. The Province has indicated that there is no limit to the number of 40 hectare expansion requests that can occur.

As a result, it is our opinion that the Town must continue to promote the inclusion of the entirety of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands in a comprehensive Settlement Area Expansion to the year 2051, otherwise both the Town and Region will be forced to deal with multiple and incremental 40-hectare urban expansion requests, and likely subsequent OLT hearings needlessly for the next decade. Along with the spectre of the imposition of Municipal Zoning Orders, both processes dramatically limit the Town's ability to effectively manage growth and development and to achieve key Town-building objectives.

The alternative of the Town promoting the designation of all the Whitebelt lands in East Gwillimbury through the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review process will, in our opinion, facilitate appropriate comprehensive planning, linked to appropriate long-term planning for transportation facilities and municipal infrastructure. We believe that this more logical approach has significant benefits including allowing the Town and the Region to manage long-term growth comprehensively through appropriate Secondary Plans and phasing policies, ensuring:

- > Higher environmental conservation and sustainability standards;
- > A full range of mixed-use development opportunities;
- > Enhanced opportunities for transit investment;
- > A diversity of housing and employment types; and,
- > A range of institutional and retail commercial uses and community facilities.

All of these important Town-building objectives are crucial parts of a complete, vibrant and well-connected Town. Secondary plans and phasing ultimately allows for proactive planning of the eventual build-out of the Town. They would still ensure that growth occurs in a logical manner and allow it to be planned so that land is ready as planned servicing becomes available within the growth horizon.

We believe that preventing Settlement Area Expansion that includes all of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands only inhibits the Town's ability to adopt effective Secondary Plans and phasing policies for these Whitebelt areas that will inevitably become developed. We also believe that the Town needs the flexibility to plan for major municipal infrastructure investments and to craft effective planning and development policies that can respond to the anticipated and projected pressures for growth, in the best interests of the Town of East Gwillimbury.

#### **5.4 Major Infrastructure Investments**

We believe that the objective of comprehensive land use planning that is fully linked to the provision of major infrastructure is crucial, and of fundamental importance to the Town. In support of significant growth within East Gwillimbury, there are a number of extremely important major infrastructure projects that will both attract and facilitate future growth in East Gwillimbury, including:

- > The Highway 400-404 Connecting Link: This major infrastructure investment has been approved by the Province and will be completed within the 2051 planning horizon. The completion of the Highway 400-404 Connecting Link will create demand for additional housing, and will support economic development on the Town's Whitebelt lands that about this facility; and,
- > The Upper York Sewage Solutions Project and Water Reclamation Centre: These significant infrastructure investments are critical investments that will have a huge impact on the future growth of East Gwillimbury. It is expected that both the Upper York Sewage Solutions Project and the Water Reclamation Centre will be completed within the 2051 planning horizon, and the Town needs to be able to appropriately plan

for all of the anticipated growth that will result from the available servicing capacity that will be generated. In this regard, comprehensive planning requires that all of East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands be fully considered in any comprehensive planning exercise.

We believe that adding and incorporating all the Whitebelt lands in the urban boundary now allows the ultimate servicing to be planned and installed in a logical, efficient and cost-effective manner. If the Whitebelt lands are excluded now and added in the future there is significant risk of incurring throw away costs due to infrastructure that needs to be upsized or adjusted at significant cost when the Whitebelt lands are ultimately added.

Further, it is recognized that major infrastructure investments, at the Regional and local levels, require significant funding from future development, and significant revenue can be expected to be generated from development within East Gwillimbury's Whitebelt lands. The revenue from the development of the Whitebelt lands will help to offset the costs of those required investments. It is considered counter-intuitive to have a major servicing project, like the Upper York Sewage Solutions Project, planned without including the development yields and revenues expected to be generated from the development of all the Whitebelt lands within the Town.

In addition, we believe that the private sector can play a significant role in helping the Region and the Town resolve the infrastructure problem that is "holding back" East Gwillimbury from achieving its full potential as a complete, vibrant and well-connected Town.

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# East Gwillimbury Official Plan Review:

## Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Report

### Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review.....	2
3.0 York Region Baseline and Projections for East Gwillimbury .....	4
4.0 East Gwillimbury Population and Residential Findings.....	11
5.0 East Gwillimbury Employment Findings.....	17
6.0 Land Capacity Analysis .....	28
7.0 Summary .....	33
Appendix A: Population and Residential Uses Background Study .....	34
Appendix B: Employment Background Study .....	74

*The conclusions contained within this report have been prepared based on both primary and secondary data sources. NBLC makes every effort to ensure the data is correct but cannot guarantee its accuracy. It is also important to note that it is not possible to fully document all factors or account for all changes that may occur in the future and influence the viability of any development. NBLC therefore assumes no responsibility for losses sustained as a result of implementing any recommendation provided in this report.*

*This report has been prepared solely for the purposes outlined herein and is not to be relied upon, or used for any other purposes, or by any other party without the prior written authorization from N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited.*

# Executive Summary

N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd. ('NBLC') was retained by the Town of East Gwillimbury ('the Town') as part of a larger multi-disciplinary team, led by The Planning Partnership, to contribute to the Town's Official Plan Review ('OPR').

As part of the OPR, NBLC was tasked with completing a Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Assessment to evaluate the assumptions related to growth in East Gwillimbury from York Region's most recent Municipal Comprehensive Review ('MCR'), and to estimate the capacity of the Town's Designated Greenfield Area ('DGA') and Whitebelt lands upon full build-out.

Our work included two background reports – one each on residential/population growth and employment growth. The background reports are appended to this report and were utilized to inform this Capacity Analysis and Land Needs report.

The following represents a summary of our findings:

- York Region has forecast a population of 104,700 persons and 36,100 jobs for East Gwillimbury by 2041. This represents significant growth from a 2016 population of 24,700 persons and 9,500 jobs.
- Based on this forecast, East Gwillimbury will grow from the smallest population centre in York Region to the fifth-largest;
- For the most part, the Town will remain a low-density residential community, with 85% of new units forecast to be single-detached, semi-detached, or townhouse units.
- The Region's MCR work noted that to accommodate this growth to 2041, 223 net hectares of Whitebelt land (181 hectares of community land, 42 hectares of employment land) will need to be added to the urban boundary after 2036. The Town's existing DGA can accommodate the forecasted growth up to this period.
- The following are the Region's key assumptions related to growth over the 2016 to 2041 growth timeline:
  - Population densities in the DGA and Whitebelt of 56 and 66 persons per net hectare, respectively;
  - Community land jobs (population-related) in the range of 8 jobs per net hectare or 6.3 residents per job;
  - Employment land densities in the DGA and Whitebelt of 45 and 40 jobs per net hectare, respectively.
- Our research indicates that these densities are reasonable.
- Despite the low population densities associated with current development applications (~40 persons per net hectare), residential uses are likely to increase in density over the growth timeline as demonstrated elsewhere in the Region with shrinking lot sizes and increased interest in medium and high-density built forms in response to increasing land values and home prices. The forecasted unit mix over the growth timeline reflects this future shift.

- Several areas elsewhere in York Region that are similarly located or include a comparable unit mix to that forecasted for East Gwillimbury are achieving similar or higher community land densities. In some cases, the market has been delivering similar or higher densities, despite having been planned prior to the current Provincial/Regional minimum density targets.
- Employment densities can vary greatly. However, the forecasts for East Gwillimbury’s existing EAs are generally in line with what is already occurring in the Town’s EAs.
- East Gwillimbury’s two vacant EAs are forecast to have a higher employment density than most other existing EAs in the Town. However, the forecasted densities are in line with, or in some cases lower than other highway adjacent EAs in York Region.
- Given the above, we do not believe additional Whitebelt lands will be required to accommodate growth to 2041 based on the Region’s growth allocation for East Gwillimbury.

- This represents an increase of 31,066 persons (+30%) and 17,390 jobs (+48%) from the 2041 allocation. The difference in population is lower than the growth projected for the 2031 to 2041 timeline (+41,100 persons).

**Capacity Analysis**

- The following table provides an estimate of the Town’s population and employment capacity upon full build-out, utilizing the Region’s density and intensification assumptions from the most recent MCR. Overall, developing the Whitebelt at these assumed densities would yield the following:
  - Total population of 135,766 persons;
  - Total employment base of 53,490 jobs;
  - Combined population and jobs total of 189,256.

<b>Capacity Analysis</b>			
<b>Full Whitebelt Build Out</b>			
	<b>Land Area (ha)</b>	<b>Density</b>	<b>Pop/Jobs Capacity</b>
<b>Built Up Area</b>			
Population	n/a	n/a	15,613
Jobs (Community + ELE)	n/a	n/a	3,636
<b>Total (BUA Lands):</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>19,248</b>
<b>Designated Greenfield Area</b>			
Community Land	1,400	64	89,600
<i>Population</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>78,440</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>11,160</i>
Employment Land	419	45	18,820
<b>Total (DGA Lands):</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>108,420</b>
<b>Whitebelt Lands</b>			
Community Land	635	74	46,941
<i>Population</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>41,714</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>5,227</i>
Employment Land	364	40	14,647
<b>Total (Whitebelt Lands):</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>61,588</b>
<b>Total:</b>			<b>189,256</b>
<b>Total Population:</b>			<b>135,766</b>
<b>Total Jobs:</b>			<b>53,490</b>
<i>Note: Net developable area for BUA unavailable at time of writing. BUA population and jobs based on 4% intensification rate set by York Region as part of 2016 to 2041 growth timeline.</i>			

- It is likely that the capacity of these lands will be higher than what has been demonstrated in the above Table. We would expect that densities will be increased for development lands beyond 2041 as the market in East Gwillimbury continues to shift. The intensification rate is also likely to naturally increase as infill townhouse, stacked townhouse, and apartment development becomes more common in the municipality leading to a higher population and jobs yield.

### **Building Out the Whitebelt to 2041**

The Town of East Gwillimbury noted interest in developing more, if not all, of the Whitebelt lands to accommodate growth to 2041. However, to do so, population and employment densities would have to be reduced significantly from the Region’s assumptions to accommodate the Town’s allocated growth. Densities would have to be reduced as follows:

- Population densities in the DGA and Whitebelt reduced from 56 and 66 persons per net hectare, respectively, to an average of 44 persons per net hectare;
- Employment land densities in the DGA and Whitebelt reduced from 45 and 40 jobs per net hectare, respectively, to an average of 24 jobs per net hectare; and,
- PRE jobs reduced from 8 jobs per net hectare to 7 jobs per net hectare in response to the reduced population in these areas.

Based on our research and analysis of other comparable community and employment areas within York Region, there is no evidence that these lower population and employment densities

are realistic. There are also potential consequences of building out the Town at these low densities including limiting overall growth potential, fewer jobs over the long-term, increased municipal service costs per capita, and a likely requirement for high intensification rates beyond 2041 to accommodate future growth.

Given the above, to justify the development of all Whitebelt lands to accommodate growth to 2041, the number of residents and jobs forecast for the Town would have to increase significantly beyond what the Region has allocated to align with more realistic densities. While increased growth may be possible, an analysis of whether further growth during this timeline is justified is not within the scope of this work and would have an impact on the Region’s allocations to other municipalities.

### **Summary**

From a residential and employment market perspective, our research has indicated that York Region was justified in their density and intensification assumptions, balancing the fact that East Gwillimbury will develop as a low-density residential community in the coming decades while also ensuring that land is available for growth beyond the 2041 timeline.

As the Region completes their current MCR, we would expect that much of the remaining Whitebelt lands are likely to be added to the DGA as part of an urban boundary expansion for the extended 2051 growth timeline. This additional ten-year allocation of population and jobs could therefore require the remaining Whitebelt lands.

# 1.0 Introduction

N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd. (‘NBLC’) was retained by the Town of East Gwillimbury (‘the Town’) as part of a larger multi-disciplinary team, led by The Planning Partnership (‘TPP’), tasked with undertaking an Official Plan Review (‘OPR’) for the Town.

As part of the OPR, NBLC was tasked with completing a Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Report to evaluate the assumptions in York Region’s most recent Municipal Comprehensive Review (‘MCR’) for East Gwillimbury (2015), and to estimate the population and jobs that would require full build-out of the Town’s Whitebelt lands.

As part of our work, we have completed two background reports that detail our research and findings. The first background report assessed population and residential growth. The second assessed employment uses. These background reports can be found in full in the Appendices at the end of this report.

The results of our background reports were utilized to inform this Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Report which is meant to provide guidance to the Town on what may be considered a reasonable assumption for future build-out of available development lands in East Gwillimbury and how much land may be required to accommodate the growth previously forecast for the Town by York Region.

This report summarizes York Region’s most recent forecasts for East Gwillimbury over the 2016 to 2041 growth timeline, summarizes our research on the local and regional residential and employment markets, and estimates the capacity of East Gwillimbury’s development lands based on the above noted research.



Source: Town of East Gwillimbury (L), Nexrock Design Build (R)

## 2.0 York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe ('Growth Plan') was updated in 2020 with, among other things, new growth forecasts for upper and single-tier municipalities to 2051, extending the growth timeline that municipalities must plan for by 10 years.

These new growth forecasts include 2,020,000 persons and 990,000 jobs in York Region ('the Region') – an increase of more than 900,000 residents (+82%)<sup>1</sup> and close to 400,000 jobs (+66%)<sup>2</sup> from 2016.

To accommodate and plan for this growth to 2051, the Region is in the midst of a Municipal Comprehensive Review ('MCR') whereby the Regional Official Plan is being updated. Among other items, this MCR will update the Region's growth allocations to each of its lower-tier municipalities as it currently only allocates growth to 2041 based on previous forecasts.

### 2.1 Work Completed to Date

The MCR and Regional Official Plan Review consider a number of items and topics beyond just growth management. However, a number of background reports related to future growth have been completed to date as part of the MCR process. These reports have helped to inform our work and include:

- Planning for Density in New Communities (2020);
- Housing Matters Report (2020);
- Planning for Employment (2019);
- Future Employment Trends Study (2019);
- Growth and Development Review (2019); and,
- Growth and Infrastructure Alignment (2019).

Public consultation on the MCR and Regional Official Plan Review are ongoing. Updated Official Plan policies are being drafted through 2020 and early 2021 with the expectation of a Draft Regional Official Plan released to the public sometime in the first half of 2021.

### 2.2 Impact on East Gwillimbury

The MCR should see the total growth allocated to East Gwillimbury increase given the additional 10 years added to the growth timeline. Given that the previous growth allocation noted full build-out of the Town's Designated Greenfield Area ('DGA') by 2036, requiring the addition of some Whitebelt lands post-2036, the new growth timeline will likely require additional Whitebelt lands to accommodate post-2041 growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on 2016 Census population

<sup>2</sup> York Region Employment and Industry Report 2016

The results of the Region’s MCR will require that the Town of East Gwillimbury adjust their own growth management plans and policies to accommodate the residents and jobs that the Region has allocated. This will be completed as part of the Town’s Official Plan Review that this report is meant to inform.

### 2.3 Purpose of this Analysis

The purpose of this analysis is two-fold:

- First, this report takes a market-based approach to evaluate the Region’s previous growth allocations for East Gwillimbury to 2041, including population and employment densities, intensification rate, and types of housing and jobs.
  - The Town had previously felt that additional Whitebelt lands would be required to accommodate the allocated growth during the 2016 to 2041 timeline than what the Region had assumed.
  - This report will evaluate whether the Region’s assumptions are reasonable from a market perspective and re-evaluate the amount of land required to meet the 2041 growth allocation, if necessary.
- Second, our work estimates what the capacity of East Gwillimbury’s DGA and Whitebelt lands are upon full build-out. This can be utilized to inform how much of the Whitebelt lands should be added to the DGA for development during the growth timeline to 2051.

Figure 1: York Region Official Plan



Source: York Region

## 3.0 York Region Baseline and Projections for East Gwillimbury

The following provides an overview of York Region’s most recent growth allocation for East Gwillimbury. This includes forecasts for population, housing units, jobs, intensification rates, and densities.

York Region completed their last Municipal Comprehensive Review (‘MCR’) in 2015, focused on a growth timeline of 2011 to 2041. The Region updated some of this data in 2019 for a growth timeline of 2016 to 2041. The bulk of the data herein is from this most recent update.

According to the previous MCR, future residential growth will be split between the following three areas in East Gwillimbury, illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page.

- **Delineated Built-Up Area (‘BUA’)<sup>3</sup>:** All land within the limits of the developed urban area or the delineated built-up boundary. The BUA absorbs growth associated with intensification;
- **Designated Greenfield Area (‘DGA’):** Lands within settlement areas (not including rural areas) but outside of delineated built-up areas that have been designated in the Official Plan for development and are required to accommodate forecasted growth to the current growth horizon. The Region has identified 1,819 net hectares<sup>4</sup> of developable DGA lands; and,

- **Whitebelt Lands:** The lands between the outer edges of the approved settlement area (BUA and DGA). An MCR and urban boundary expansion is required for these lands to be added to the DGA for development. Without an urban boundary expansion, these lands cannot be developed. The Region has identified approximately 999 net hectares of developable Whitebelt lands.

The Region noted that the 1,819 net hectares of DGA land would be built out by 2036 based on the growth allocations. After 2036, 223 net hectares of Whitebelt land is estimated to be required as part of an urban boundary expansion to accommodate the population and employment growth between 2036 and 2041. Figure 3, on page 6, illustrates the location of the Whitebelt lands proposed to be part of the future urban boundary expansion.

The developable area is split between **community lands** and **employment lands**. Community lands accommodate all population and residential development, along with most population-related jobs. Employment lands accommodate employment land employment (business parks, industrial areas). Major office employment can be found in either area.

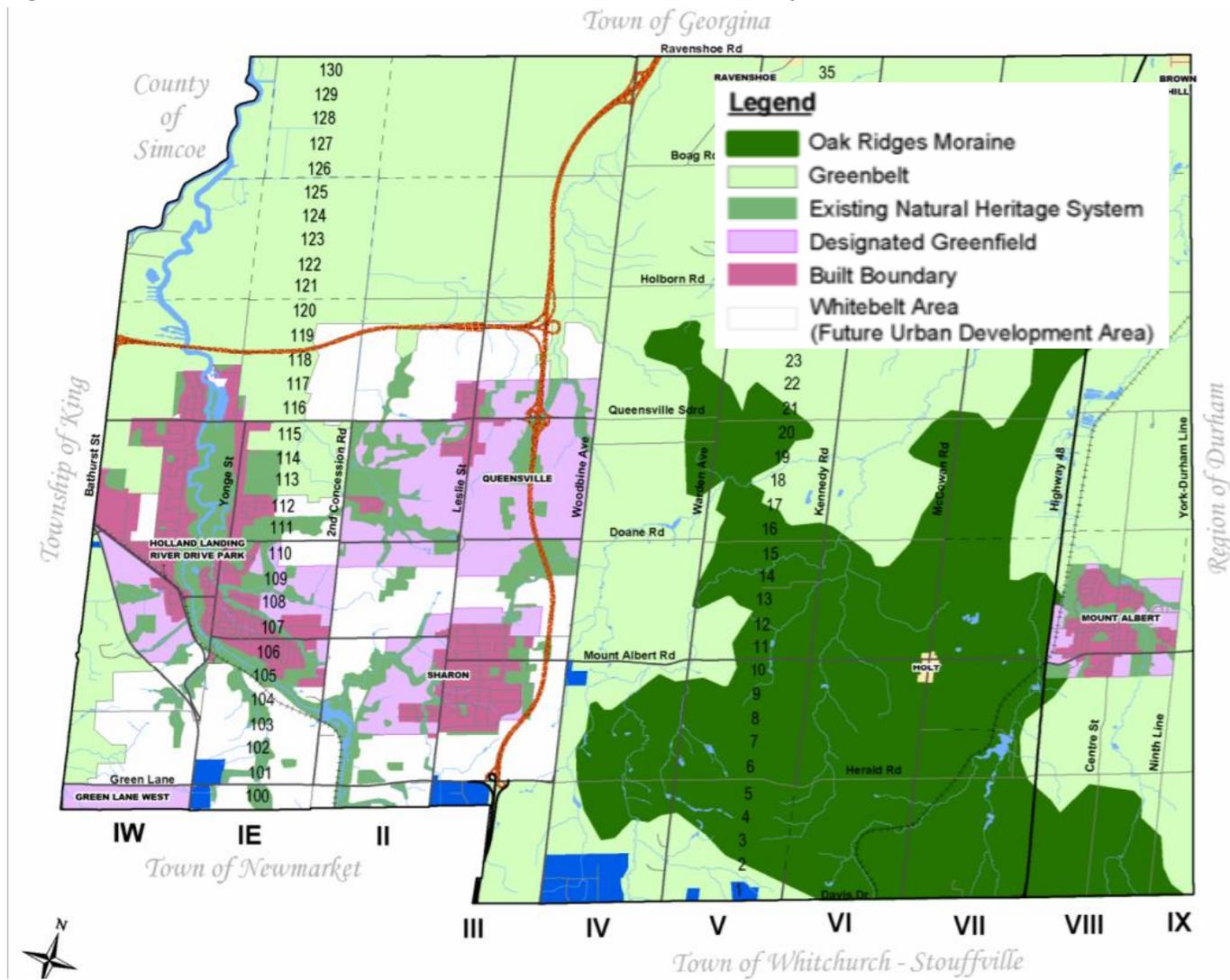
The following section provides an overview of the Region’s 2041 growth assumptions for East Gwillimbury.

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<sup>3</sup> The land area of the BUA is not identified in the Region’s MCR work. However, mapping by TPP estimates that it includes 1,523 gross hectares for both community and employment uses

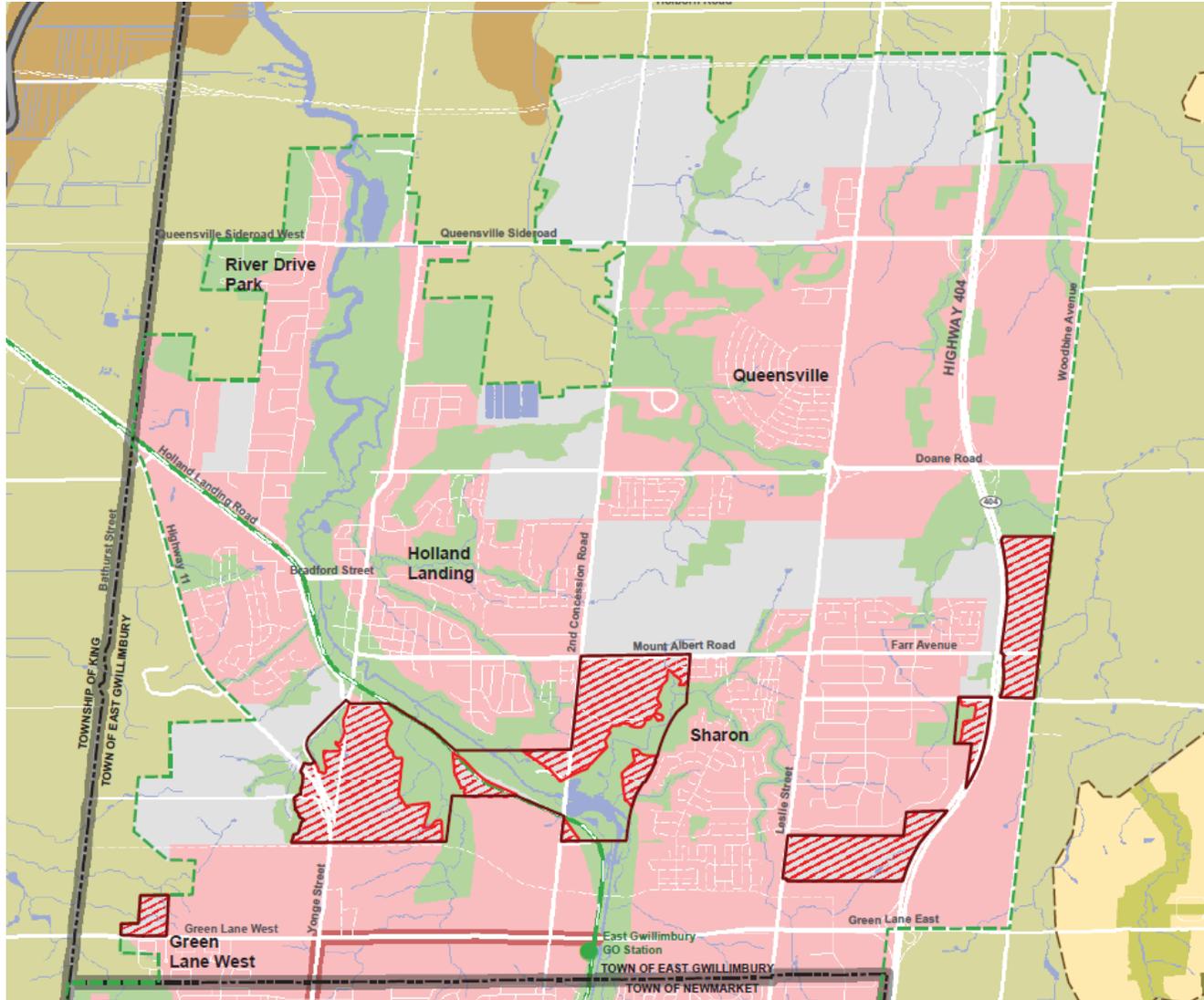
<sup>4</sup> The Growth Plan measures net hectares – the developable area – as excluding natural heritage areas, rights of way for electricity/energy lines, freeways, railways, employment areas, and cemeteries.

Figure 2: Location of BUA, DGA, and Whitebelt Lands in East Gwillimbury



Source: Town of East Gwillimbury

**Figure 3: Location of Whitebelt Lands Proposed for Urban Boundary Expansion**



Source: York Region

### 3.1 Population and Residential Units

With the Region forecasted to grow to a population of 1,790,000 persons by 2041, the Town of East Gwillimbury was allocated a total of 104,700 residents, representing an increase of 80,000 persons from 24,700 in 2016<sup>5</sup> (+324%). Based on this, the Town of East Gwillimbury will grow from the smallest community on a population basis in 2016 to the fifth largest in 2041.

The population growth is anticipated to largely occur in the latter stages of the growth horizon, with the period between 2031 and 2041 (+41,100 people) seeing more growth than the preceding 15-year period (+38,900 people). Servicing of land is a factor in this delayed growth.

To accommodate this population growth, the Region forecasts that 23,590 new residential units will be required between 2016 and 2041.

The Town is expected to remain a low-density residential community through the growth timeline, with 85% of new units anticipated to be single-detached, semi-detached, or townhouse units. Townhouses are expected to become a more prominent housing type in the Town, increasing from approximately 550 units in 2016 (7% of existing housing stock) to more than 7,000 units in 2041 (28% of new development, 22% of 2041 housing stock) – an increase of close to 1200% (Table 1).

<sup>5</sup> This Regional estimate for East Gwillimbury includes the undercount and is therefore higher than the 2016 Census population

Higher-density development like apartments and stacked townhouses are forecasted to become more prominent in East Gwillimbury over time, albeit still only representing 15% of new residential growth to 2041. These built forms are also forecast to mostly be constructed after 2031.

**Table 1**

Residential Unit Growth Forecast By Type East Gwillimbury, 2016 to 2041						
Unit Type	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change	
					Total	%
Single-Detached	6,750	9,300	13,980	18,900	12,150	180%
Semi-Detached	200	420	870	1,670	1,470	735%
Townhouse	550	1,110	2,680	7,080	6,530	1187%
Stacked Townhouse	0	0	190	1,030	1,030	-
Apartment	280	280	650	2,060	1,780	636%
Duplex	320	420	680	950	630	197%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8,100</b>	<b>11,530</b>	<b>19,050</b>	<b>31,690</b>	<b>23,590</b>	<b>291%</b>

*Source: York Region*

The Growth Plan states that 50% of all new residential development in York Region be within the BUA. This is known as the “intensification target”. The residential intensification target that had been set for the Town of East Gwillimbury as part of the previous MCR was 4%. This is the lowest intensification rate in the Region, pointing to the importance of the Town’s greenfield lands to accommodate future residential development. The market and land supply characteristics for East Gwillimbury’s BUA supports this low target.

Along with the 4% intensification rate for the BUA, York Region provided two specific population density targets<sup>6</sup> for the Town of East Gwillimbury in their MCR:

- 56 people per net hectare in the DGA; and,
- 66 people per net hectare on Whitebelt lands.

Given the later timeline for Whitebelt development (2036-2041), the density target for the Whitebelt lands is higher than the existing DGA as densities are expected to increase over time. This is a reasonable assumption due to a combination of factors including shrinking lot sizes and increased land values leading to shift towards more medium and high-density units.

Most new residential development and population growth in East Gwillimbury will occur on DGA lands by virtue of the low intensification target for the municipality. The DGA lands will absorb 81% of the new residential development in the Town from 2016 to 2041, approximately 19,110 units (Table 2).

Based on a population of 104,700 persons in 2041, the Region’s MCR noted the following population totals in East Gwillimbury:

- BUA: 14,370 persons<sup>7</sup>;
- DGA: 78,440 persons; and,
- Whitebelt: 11,890 persons.

**Table 2**

Forecasted Distribution of New Residential Units Town of East Gwillimbury, 2016 to 2041										
Housing Type	New Units (2016-2041)	Built-Up Area			Designated Greenfield Area			Whitebelt Area		
		Total Units	%	% EG New Units*	Total Units	%	% EG New Units*	Total Units	%	% EG New Units*
Single-Detached	12,150	20	2%	0%	10,040	53%	83%	2,070	57%	17%
Semi-Detached	1,470	0	0%	0%	1,300	7%	88%	170	5%	12%
Townhouse	6,530	230	27%	4%	5,010	26%	77%	1,280	35%	20%
Stacked Townhouse	1,030	0	0%	0%	1,030	5%	100%	0	0%	0%
Apartment	1,780	560	65%	31%	1,120	6%	63%	100	3%	6%
Duplex	630	50	6%	8%	540	3%	86%	0	0%	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>23,590</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>19,040</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15%</b>

*\*Refers to the % of units relative to total new units forecast for the 2016-2041 growth period of that housing type in the Town of East Gwillimbury  
Note: Figures may not add due to rounding. An additional 20 units are forecasted to be constructed in rural areas outside the BUA, DGA, and whitebelt land boundaries.  
Source: York Region*

<sup>6</sup> These densities exclude population-related jobs

<sup>7</sup> The MCR did not note this total specifically. However, this total has been calculated by subtracting the stated DGA and whitebelt populations from the total population forecast.

### 3.2 Employment Projections

York Region has utilized census and other data to estimate the number of jobs that fall under the following categories as defined by the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology:

- **Population-Related Employment (PRE):** Jobs that primarily serve a resident population, including retail, education, health care, local government, and work-at-home employment. The vast majority are in community areas.
- **Major Office Employment (MOE):** Office jobs in free-standing buildings more than 20,000 net square feet (1,858 m<sup>2</sup>).
- **Employment Land Employment (ELE):** Jobs accommodated primarily in industrial-type buildings. The vast majority are located within business parks and industrial areas (i.e. employment areas) within settlement areas. In older urban centres, some share of this type of employment also occurs in more dispersed locations.
- **Rural-Based Employment (RBE):** Jobs scattered throughout rural lands that include agriculture and primary industries as well as other uses that might typically be found in existing employment areas located outside of settlement areas on rural lands. Uses will typically include agriculture-related uses such as feed or fertilizer facilities, small-scale manufacturing or construction businesses run from rural and farm properties and some scattered retail or service uses.

York Region estimates the number of jobs within East Gwillimbury to be 9,500 for the 2016 census year. As illustrated by Table 3, there is currently no MOE in the Town, and this category is expected to only grow modestly to 2041.

ELE and PRE currently accommodate 82% of all jobs in the Town. York Region forecasts that these two categories will accommodate 96% of all employment growth to 2041. RBE currently accommodates 18% of the Town’s employment and is expected to grow by 500 jobs to 2041.

**Table 3**  
**Projected Employment Growth by Type**  
**East Gwillimbury, 2016 to 2041**

Employment Type	2016	2041	Change 2016 - 2041
Major Office	0	500	500
Employment Area	3,400	16,700	13,300
Population-Related	4,400	16,700	12,300
Rural	1,700	2,200	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>36,100</b>	<b>26,600</b>

*Source: York Region*

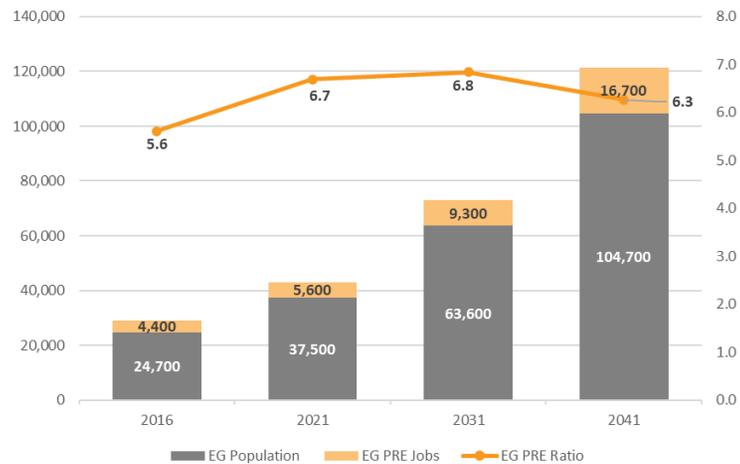
#### 3.2.1 Population-Related Employment

Figure 4 illustrates the forecasted relationship between East Gwillimbury’s total population and total PRE jobs between 2016 and 2041.

To support the rapidly growing population, East Gwillimbury is planning for an additional 12,300 PRE jobs between 2016 and

2041. As shown in Figure 4, East Gwillimbury’s PRE ratio was estimated at 5.6 in 2016 and is anticipated to peak at 6.8 in 2031, before gradually declining by 2041 to 6.3.

**Figure 4: Population to PRE Ratio, East Gwillimbury**



Source: urbanMetrics inc., based on the 2019 York Region Population Forecasts

The Region’s work notes that the total PRE jobs density in community areas (DGA and Whitebelt) is equivalent to approximately 8 jobs per net hectare.

### 3.2.2 Employment Land Employment

York Region forecasts that the majority of new employment land employment will be situated on vacant employment lands. The estimated employment intensification rate is low at 2% to 2041.

Table 4 summarizes the forecasted densities for East Gwillimbury’s major employment areas. The forecasted densities are mostly in

line with existing densities, with the exception of ROPA 1 and Highway 404/Queensville, which are currently vacant. These six employment areas are anticipated to absorb 14,320 jobs between 2016 and 2041, with the majority (85%) in the two vacant areas.

Overall, the Region forecasts an employment density of 45 jobs per net hectare across 419 net hectares of DGA employment lands. Like with residential uses, additional Whitebelt lands will be required to accommodate employment growth to beyond 2036. The Region estimates that 42 net hectares of Whitebelt for the 2036 to 2041 time period. These lands are forecast to have an employment density of 40 jobs per net hectare.

**Table 4**

Employment Land Density Assumptions East Gwillimbury			
Employment Area	Current Density	Forecast Density for Vacant Lands	Vacant Capacity (Jobs)
Holland Landing	18	20	450
Mount Albert	27	25	100
Bales Drive	29	30	630
Green Lane	45	50	980
Highway 404/Queensville	-	50	7,100
ROPA 1	-	50	5,060

Source: York Region MCR Assumptions

## 4.0 East Gwillimbury Population and Residential Findings

The following represents a summary of our research on East Gwillimbury's population and residential market. This includes an overview of drivers of residential demand, a survey of the local residential market, a review of active residential development applications, and an analysis of densities in other comparable communities in York Region. Our detailed background report can be found in Appendix A at the end of this report.

### 4.1 Drivers of Population Growth and Residential Demand

At a macro-level, four factors drive population growth:

- Fertility rates;
- Life expectancy / mortality rates;
- Migration / immigration; and,
- Current / future population structure.

Population growth / decline is the primary driver – or inhibitor – of residential demand. However, there are a number of other factors that drive or inhibit demand for residential uses in general, what types of residential uses are in demand, and where the demand is focused. These include:

- **Population related factors:** An aging population, households forming later in life, increased immigration, and lifestyle preferences (e.g. suburban vs urban living);

- **Economic-related factors:** Employment growth, housing affordability, interest rates, and land availability;
- **Government policy:** Growth plans, Provincial Policy Statement, Official Plans, Greenbelt Act, decisions / spending on servicing, etc.; and,
- **Locational factors:** Proximity to employment, transit, highway access, retail, schools, healthcare facilities, etc.

More recently, COVID-19 is also impacting the types and location of housing that people are seeking and the way we live and work is changing. Throughout the pandemic, demand for low-density housing in suburban communities such as East Gwillimbury has been growing at a significant rate while high-density demand has softened. This demand has been driven by:

- People accelerating purchasing decisions as they seek more personal space;
- An increase in the number of companies that are allowing employees to work from home – in some cases permanently;
- Young renters moving home with parents either due to concerns associated with the pandemic or job loss, softening demand for high-density units in urban centres; and,
- Reduced demand for apartments from post-secondary students and hourly workers – two key groups driving high-density residential demand.

It seems logical that more people will have the flexibility to work at home in the future which will only strengthen demand for larger homes. The longer-term effects of the pandemic may further fuel demand in communities like East Gwillimbury where there is a significant amount of greenfield land available for medium and low-density forms of housing. Many of the larger communities in the GTA are quickly running out of available greenfield land, leading to their shift towards higher densities.

Increasing residential prices elsewhere in the GTA also provide East Gwillimbury with an affordability advantage. Housing is generally priced at a more attainable price point, and with increasing work from home flexibility, could create a situation where more buyers consider East Gwillimbury when making a purchasing decision.

Finally, improved highway access and further employment growth should also provide East Gwillimbury with a strategic advantage that will drive population growth and residential demand.

Notwithstanding the above, East Gwillimbury does not currently feature many of the drivers of higher density residential demand – like transit access, walkable neighbourhoods, and high employment concentrations. This will ensure it remains a predominantly low-density community in the near-term. Assets like highway access noted above are also key drivers for suburban, low-rise residential development.

## 4.2 Residential Market Context

Our review of East Gwillimbury’s residential market noted several key findings, including:

- **East Gwillimbury’s place in the Regional residential market is growing.** After accounting for 2.5% or less of new low-rise home sales in York Region from 2001 to 2013, East Gwillimbury has seen its share of new housing sales increase to at least 4% of regional sales in six of the past seven years, surpassing 10% in 2015, 2016 and 2020 (year-to-date). The increased demand driven by a number of factors including increased pricing and declining low-density supply elsewhere in York Region.
- **Sales for new homes have increased significantly in East Gwillimbury.** Since 2014, the Town has averaged more than 600 new low-rise sales per year after averaging just 75 sales per year between 2001 and 2013.
- **A local high-rise market has yet to form.** The lack of an established urban core, concentrated amenities, and competition from more urbanized communities will undermine significant high-density residential market demand in East Gwillimbury for the foreseeable future.
- **Pricing has been growing rapidly** for all housing types in East Gwillimbury – both for new and resale units. As prices continue to climb, it is likely that demand will shift from single-detached homes to an increased number of townhouses, and eventually stacked townhouses and apartments.

- While municipalities to the south focus on intensification, **East Gwillimbury will play an increasingly important role in York Region by servicing demand for family-sized, low-rise residential units.** East Gwillimbury is likely to enhance the attractiveness of York Region by offering a strong supply of low-rise housing options, providing choice to current and future residents as they evaluate housing options across the broader GTHA.

### 4.3 Proposed Residential Supply

Residential development applications can provide insight into the densities that are currently being achieved in a community. There were 31 active residential development applications in East Gwillimbury at the time of writing. Key findings include:

- The majority of applications and proposed units are located in the designated greenfield area ('DGA'), encompassing more than 50% of the Town's DGA community lands (Table 5).

**Table 5**

Proposed Units by Development Area East Gwillimbury, October 2020					
Growth Area	Total Land Area (net ha)	Land Area Under Application	% Land Area Under Application	Proposed Units	% Forecasted Unit Growth (16-41)
Built-Up Area	n/a	4.9	n/a	124	14%
Designated Greenfield Area	1,400	743.1	53%	9,104	48%

*Source: Town of East Gwillimbury, York Region*

- 85% of proposed units are either single-detached or townhouses – similar to the Region's forecast for the Town.

The applications are estimated to include more than 30,000 residents when built-out (Table 6).

**Table 6**

Proposed Units and Estimated Population Town of East Gwillimbury, October 2020				
Unit Type	No. Units	% Units	PPU	Population
Single-Detached	5,381	58%	3.76	20,233
Semi-Detached	474	5%	3.17	1,503
Townhouse	2,478	27%	2.88	7,137
Apartment	184	2%	2.42	445
Seniors Apartment	300	3%	1.50	450
Retirement	411	4%	1.10	452
Stacked Townhouse	0	0%	2.68	0
Duplex	0	0%	3.20	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>9,228</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>30,219</b>

*Source: Town of East Gwillimbury, York Region*

- Overall population densities are estimated at 40 persons per net hectare across the 31 applications – well below the target of 56 persons per hectare for the DGA set by the Region.
- Based on the estimated population density in the development applications, an average population density of 74 persons per net hectare would be required for the 657 net hectares of remaining DGA lands to meet the Region's target.
- Given that future developments are expected to include a lower proportion of single-detached homes (Table 7), this target may be reasonable.

**Table 7**

Forecasted and Proposed Units in the Designated Greenfield Area East Gwillimbury, 2016 to 2041						
Unit Type	Forecasted Units	%	Proposed Units <sup>^</sup>	%	Remaining Units	%
Single-Detached	10,040	53%	5,375	59%	4,665	47%
Semi-Detached	1,300	7%	472	5%	828	8%
Townhouse	5,010	26%	2,372	26%	2,638	27%
Apartment*	1,030	5%	885	10%	145	1%
Stacked Townhouse	1,120	6%	0	0%	1,120	11%
Duplex	540	3%	0	0%	540	5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>19,040</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,104</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,936</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Retirement units have been counted as apartments; <sup>^</sup>Based on active development applications  
Source: Town of East Gwillimbury, York Region

#### 4.4 Reconciling Market Realities with Regional Targets

East Gwillimbury is likely to remain primarily a low-density residential market for the foreseeable future. However, based on forecasts and general market trends, there should eventually be a shift to a higher proportion of townhouses, along with some new apartment and stacked townhouse development which would increase the density of new development.

We also note that current development applications yield density estimates well below those established by the Region for the Town's future growth and that future development beyond current proposals will have to have significantly higher population densities than these applications.

The question becomes – are the Region's density targets for East Gwillimbury's population reasonable? Or should they be lower given the trends in the current development applications?

As part of their ongoing MCR, York Region released a report in June 2020 called Planning for Density in New Communities which included an analysis of the population and job densities in 12 new community areas across the Region. The results of this work by York Region can be utilized to analyze whether the density targets for East Gwillimbury are reasonable by considering what is already happening in York Region today.

Table 8 on the following page summarizes the findings on the 12 study areas. Not all of these study areas are comparable to East Gwillimbury. Several are in much larger and denser communities (Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill), while others have unit mixes that are significantly different from what is forecast for East Gwillimbury (South Keswick, King City Southeast). Those that we believe are most comparable are highlighted in Table 8.

The following are key findings.

- These 12 new community areas have been planned and building out since as far back as the late-1990's, in many cases before the Growth Plan and Region's density targets were in place.
- Despite this, the market has delivered densities above the Growth Plan target (50 persons and jobs per hectare), and in many cases close to or above the Region's own higher density targets (70 persons and jobs per hectare), demonstrating that

communities with a high proportion of ground-related units can still meet these densities.

- Ten of 12 study areas include population densities of at least 50 persons per net hectare (excluding jobs), with five expected to surpass 60 persons per net hectare (excluding jobs). These totals are in line with the forecasted population densities for East Gwillimbury’s DGA and Whitebelt lands of 56 and 66 persons per net hectare, respectively.
- These study areas provide several comparable examples of what can be expected in terms of densities in East Gwillimbury’s DGA lands – demonstrating that the market can reasonably deliver on density targets in line with what has been forecast for East Gwillimbury.

- Density is driven by land value, which in turn is driven by demand. As demand increases and land values rise, developers must increase densities to achieve satisfactory returns. This has led to decreasing single-detached lot sizes in many York Region communities – as low as 25’ to 30’ – as well as an increasing amount of townhouse development. Eventually, this can also lead to increased stacked townhouse and apartment development.
- This trend of increasing density should follow in East Gwillimbury as demand continues to increase and land values continue to rise.

**Table 8**

<b>York Region Community Density Analysis</b>											
Study Area	Municipality	Land Area (ha)		Housing Mix at Build-Out				No. Residents		Pop. Density (persons/ha)	
		Built (2016)	Total	Single	Semi	Townhouses	Apartments	2016	Build-Out	2016	Build-Out
Aurora 2B / 2C	Aurora	217	362	52%	6%	26%	16%	10,870	19,310	50	53
Green Lane	East Gwillimbury	62	68	47%	21%	32%	0%	2,190	2,190	35	32
South Keswick	Georgina	76	134	79%	8%	13%	0%	3,810	6,780	50	51
King City Southeast	King	167	205	95%	0%	4%	1%	2,620	3,260	16	16
Berczy	Markham	387	399	58%	12%	26%	4%	23,300	24,780	60	62
Wismer Commons	Markham	348	376	47%	16%	21%	16%	21,140	25,740	61	68
Newmarket Northwest	Newmarket	149	189	56%	13%	30%	1%	9,550	12,230	64	65
Jefferson Sideroad	Richmond Hill	175	180	78%	0%	22%	0%	8,840	8,910	51	50
Oak Ridges	Richmond Hill	255	267	61%	5%	27%	7%	13,850	15,470	54	58
Block 18	Vaughan	192	213	68%	17%	15%	0%	11,470	12,370	60	58
Block 39	Vaughan	363	370	62%	16%	16%	6%	21,200	22,780	58	62
Stouffville Southcentral	Whitchurch-Stouffville	111	134	63%	21%	16%	0%	7,670	8,740	69	65

*Source: York Region Planning for Density in New Communities*

## 4.5 Density Conclusions

The evidence from several study areas throughout York Region – ones from comparable communities and with similar unit mixes – indicate that **York Region’s assumption of 56 persons per net hectare in East Gwillimbury’s DGA lands is a reasonable target that should be possible to achieve over the forecast period.**

In order for the overall DGA to hit the 56 persons per net hectare target set by the Region, the DGA land not accounted for in the current development applications would have to accommodate growth at a rate of 74 persons per net hectare.

While this is much higher than what is currently being built, it is not considered an unreasonable target. The mix of units that are still forecasted to be built – with a lower proportion of single-detached units – and the likelihood of a continued decline in lot sizes over time as land values increase, make this population density achievable.

Further, while the Region has assumed a modest number of apartment and stacked townhouse units built to 2041, some of the work recently completed by the Town could conceivably lead to an increase in these numbers, and in turn increase the population densities beyond the forecasts. The Green Lane Secondary Plan in particular notes a build-out with 970 high-rise apartment units in the Secondary Plan area, as well as 3,500 medium density units that could include townhouses, stacked townhouses, and low-rise apartments.

In the Whitebelt, the population density target for the 181 net hectares of community land to be added to the DGA after 2036 is notably higher than the DGA target at 66 persons per net hectare.

However, several comparable areas in York Region provide strong evidence that a low-density community can achieve similar population densities to these targets. As with the DGA, we would expect that lot sizes will continue to decline in East Gwillimbury in the coming decades in response to reduced greenfield availability and increasing home prices – as they have elsewhere.

Given the above and the longer-term timeline for the build out of these Whitebelt lands, NBLC believes that **the population density of 66 persons per net hectare for the Whitebelt lands is reasonable.**

## 5.0 East Gwillimbury Employment Findings

The following represents a summary of our research on East Gwillimbury’s employment market. Our detailed background report can be found in Appendix B at the end of this report, which was completed with UrbanMetrics.

### 5.1 Employment Profile

Retail trade (16%), construction (13%), manufacturing (9%), transportation / warehousing (7%), and health care / social assistance (7%) are the top five sectors in East Gwillimbury, representing 52% of all jobs in the Town as of 2016.

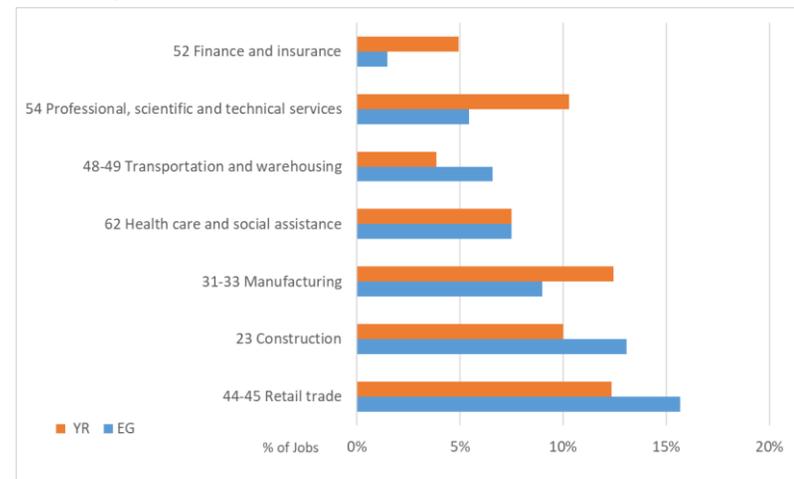
As noted in Figure 5, East Gwillimbury has a higher proportion of jobs in construction, retail, and transportation/warehousing than York Region. On the other hand, East Gwillimbury also has notably fewer jobs in professional services, as well as finance, relative to York Region.

Between the 2011 and 2016 census years, East Gwillimbury grew by 2,007 jobs, representing a growth rate of 30%. By comparison, York Region’s employment grew by approximately 12%. East Gwillimbury’s employment growth was driven by a few notable sectors:

- Of the 2,007 jobs added in East Gwillimbury, the construction (614 new jobs) and transportation and warehousing (312 new jobs) sectors accounted for nearly half of the growth.

- The next major growth sectors contributing were education, health care/social assistance, accommodation/food services, and public administration. These sectors, combined with construction and transportation/warehousing, account for 85% of all jobs created in East Gwillimbury over this period.

**Figure 5: Top Employment Sector of Jobs in East Gwillimbury and York Region**



Source: Statistics Canada Place of Work Data – 2016 Census

### 5.2 Population-Related Employment

Population-related employment (PRE) is employment that primarily serves a resident population and generally grows in line with population growth. In some cases, such as tourism centres

and regional service centres, PRE can be supported by non-local populations. This category of employment is generally diverse with a wide range of location requirements; however, it mirrors the geographic distribution of residential populations.

For some municipalities where a number of regional government services are located, the proportion of PRE will be higher. The remaining PRE growth is primarily retail, food services, and other personal services that locate within residential communities or on commercial lands. A share of PRE also occurs within employment lands, either as ancillary to local businesses (e.g. restaurants, hotels, and banks), or because of its need for expansive low cost land parcels (e.g. municipal works depots, banquet halls, automotive sales and repair facilities).

Work at home employment, a rapidly growing employment type – particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic – is also generally captured in this category. Home-based employment is anticipated to generally increase in proportion to population growth.

The following provides an overview of factors driving the PRE market, the existing PRE market in East Gwillimbury, and consideration for how the Town should plan for these uses.

### 5.2.1 Factors Driving PRE Demand

PRE sectors are wide-ranging and flexible uses that tend to locate in places that directly serve communities and local workforces. Similar to office development, the site selection criteria of PRE businesses are varied, however there are some essential factors that drive decision making.

Some of these key drivers include:

- **Proximity to population areas:** PRE sectors are generally attracted to locations convenient to residents. As the population grows, the demand for PRE also increases to service the needs of the local community;
- **Cross-shopping opportunities:** PRE businesses and institutions gain efficiencies by locating near each other. A local example of this is the regional commercial node at Yonge Street and Green Lane. Commercial developers and tenants continue to locate in this area as it has an existing regional market draw and presents an opportunity for shoppers to make multiple, simplified trips across different stores in one location;
- **Access and visibility:** More visibility from arterial roadways / highway begets more potential customers or users. For many PRE sectors, the better visibility your business has, the less advertising is required. Proximity to highways / arterial roadways also improves accessibility for employees;
- **Access to transit:** All PRE sectors generally benefit from access to high-order transit. The rise of e-commerce may have reduced the need for consumers to make multiple trips, but transit hubs have nearly guaranteed foot traffic and transit users represent a captive and regular audience. Proximity to transit also improves accessibility for employees; and,
- **Appropriate land area:** PRE businesses require sites that can accommodate their desired floor plates and parking spaces, particularly in suburban markets like East Gwillimbury where the majority of people drive.

## 5.2.2 East Gwillimbury's PRE Market

East Gwillimbury is characterized as a predominantly suburban / rural municipality, however, it maintains a robust PRE sector. Retail trade is East Gwillimbury's top employment sector, accounting for 16% of total jobs in 2016. Further, several major growth sectors in East Gwillimbury are considered PRE sectors, including education, health care/social assistance, accommodation/food services, and public administration.

Based on Statistics Canada Place of Work data, there were just under 4,000 PRE jobs in East Gwillimbury in 2016, an increase of some 1,700 PRE jobs since 2006. This total differs from the York Region employment forecasts prepared in 2019 which estimates that East Gwillimbury had 4,400 PRE jobs in 2016. This is likely due to the inclusion of jobs with no fixed place of work in the York Region forecasts, of which a portion would be PRE<sup>8</sup>.

East Gwillimbury's current PRE market suffers from the municipality's lack of established corridors and nodes. While the Yonge Street and Green Lane area is designated as a "Major Local Centre" and has gradually evolved into a prominent hub for PRE businesses, it generally functions as an extension to Newmarket's regional commercial area to the south, as the vast majority of residential lands in the vicinity of this node are in Newmarket.

Without a defined urban centre, the majority of East Gwillimbury's PRE businesses have tended to scatter throughout its residential communities.

East Gwillimbury is expected to add 80,000 residents over the 2016 to 2041 forecast period. To support this population growth, East Gwillimbury is planning for an additional 12,300 PRE jobs which will translate to a PRE ratio of 6.3 residents per PRE job.

**The forecast number of PRE jobs is considered reasonable** in light of the PRE ratios in other GTA regional municipalities (excluding Toronto). East Gwillimbury is currently not planned to accommodate large scale major institutions, such as a hospital or university or a major new tourism attraction – which would have a significant impact on the need for additional PRE jobs beyond the forecast. Although as the Town grows, it will likely be capable of attracting uses and activities that cannot currently locate locally due to its small population size.

There is the potential that more of the workforce will be working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic moving forward. While this could contribute to higher PRE job numbers, it is more realistic that most employees will return to a flexible work schedule that combines office and home-based work. As such, these employees would not be considered as part of the PRE category.

We anticipate that the build out of East Gwillimbury's community lands within the built boundary and Whitebelt will be predominantly residential development, with modest growth in

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<sup>8</sup> Growth Plan employment estimates use a formula to allocate employment with no fixed place of work to specific municipalities. PRE jobs which may have no fixed place of work include, domestic workers,

gardeners, private repair persons, some gig economy workers, etc, who do not report to a specific address or location on a regular basis.

office and institutional uses. It is likely that the majority of East Gwillimbury's future PRE jobs increase in relation to population growth. That being said, we recognize that East Gwillimbury's need for PRE jobs could change in the future if the Green Lane regional corridor is fully realized with higher density, mixed-use and office development as called for in the Secondary Plan, or if a major use such as a university campus is attracted to the Town.

### **5.2.3 Implications for East Gwillimbury Land Needs and Official Plan Policies**

East Gwillimbury's PRE market is generally healthy and serves a regional market area. The most significant node of PRE businesses is located at Yonge Street and Green Lane, which is anticipated to continue evolving as the northwest corner builds out with additional retail uses.

Both the Town and Region should leverage this node's concentration of PRE businesses – as well as its proximity to the GO Transit station – as it could function as a logical urban centre. Once an urban centre is established, the Town will have a stronger ability to attract a wider diversity of PRE businesses, including institutions, healthcare, government services, and accommodation and food services. The future of PRE along the Green Lane regional corridor will hinge on the construction of mixed-use development and potential office or institutional uses.

Policies in the Official Plan should be flexible and permissive to allow for a diverse range of PRE businesses, however attention must be paid to the outcomes envisioned for each area.

#### **5.2.3.1 Employment Areas**

PRE businesses are often an important part of Employment Areas by serving the on-site workforce, acting as a buffer between industrial uses and nearby residential communities, and occupying undesirable sites that are not large enough to accommodate industrial uses.

We believe the Official Plan should address those PRE uses that are best accommodated within Employment lands. This may vary between employment areas – those with better access to residential areas could have permissions for a broader range of contemporary PRE businesses (i.e. commercial “ghost” kitchens and unique recreation uses such as rock climbing gyms, obstacle courses, indoor golf, etc). These uses are not generally compatible with community and commercial areas from a land use perspective; however, they have regional drawing power and could increase day-trip tourism for the municipality. In addition, the Town should review where large-scale commercial uses that require outdoor storage, such as automobile and boat dealerships, public storage outlets, automotive sales, garden centres, etc. would best be located and determine to the extent that employment areas would be required to accommodate them.

#### **5.2.3.2 Community Areas (Built Boundary and Whitebelt)**

Within these areas, we recommend that future planning efforts continue to prioritize the build-out and intensification of “Village Core Areas” and “Major Local Centres”. These areas are already

located along major collector/arterial roadways and have the capacity to accommodate additional PRE businesses.

It is our opinion that when planning for PRE jobs in the Town's Community Areas, the Official Plan should permit commercial and institutional uses along corridors that have constant two-way traffic and serve as a gateway to/from a collector and/or arterial roadway. We do not recommend planning for another regional commercial node or encouraging the development of neighbourhood retail that is internal to a residential community.

**In summary of this section, we believe the PRE employment projections and ratios for East Gwillimbury are reasonable for long-term planning purposes.** As such, we do not believe that the Region will need to allocate additional PRE employment growth to effectively serve the forecast population.

## 5.3 Major Office Employment

At the current time, East Gwillimbury does not have a major office market, which is confirmed by the census data and York Region's 2016 baseline for the Town. Outside of some medical and service uses, and a small number of homes used as office space, there are no major office uses in the Town at the current time.

The following provides an overview of the office market in the GTA, what drives office demand, and implications for East Gwillimbury.

### 5.3.1 GTA Office Market Trends

Prior to the 1980s, most office development occurred in Toronto's Downtown as well as select locations along the subway system and other non-transit areas adjacent major highways.

Between the 1980s and 1990s, office development continued to occur in the most central areas, but significant office development also began to occur in suburban locations in the '90s' due to the popularity of the suburbs for housing, ease of commuting by car, GO rail expansion, favourable tax rates, and worker preferences for suburban office parks at the time.

By the mid-2000s, office development yet-again shifted back to Toronto. Between 2011 and 2016, Toronto accounted for 72% of all new office space added to the GTA market, with the large majority being Downtown. Currently, over 90% of all office space under construction in the GTA is within Downtown Toronto<sup>9</sup>.

The predominance of the Downtown Toronto market is generally a result of this area being able to 'tick' the greatest number of boxes for prospective tenants – namely, proximity to talent, greater networking opportunities, amenity rich environments, cultural, recreation, entertainment opportunities, walkable residential opportunities, and access to higher order transit.

While these concentrated development patterns are concerning for many municipalities attempting to attract office investment across the GTA, it is also noted that pricing in Downtown Toronto

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<sup>9</sup> CBRE Marketview, Toronto Office, Q4 2019.

has become very expensive. Net asking rents in Downtown Toronto have increased beyond \$60 psf for much of the higher quality space, whereas average net asking rents are currently below \$30 psf in many other GTA communities.

It is possible that some demand will shift new office development to less expensive suburban locations as businesses are priced out of the core. However, these locations must address the drivers of demand identified below to be competitive. We are therefore seeing the office market being attracted to suburban transit nodes (e.g. VMC) as well as non-downtown Toronto locations (e.g. Eglinton LRT corridor, GO Stations).

#### 5.3.1.1 Office Densification

While a small number of market areas are absorbing a sizeable proportion of overall office demand, new office buildings are developing more efficiently than ever before. This is largely due to more efficient office layouts. Employee dense co-working office space is also becoming more prominent and it is expected that telecommuting and “work from home” will continue to become more accepted. These trends are resulting in an overall lower GFA being required per worker to satisfy future employment growth.

While the implication of shifting office demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has yet to play-out, and may not for some time, East Gwillimbury will compete against all other GTA municipalities to attract a share of what may be shrinking demand for office space on a per worker basis.

#### 5.3.2 Factors Driving Office Demand

The site selection priorities of businesses that require office space vary, but the fundamental preferences of prospective tenants and office developers tend to be similar. The following represents the key factors driving demand for office in the GTA:

- **Access to labour and talent:** Population centres and central areas being key areas for office development;
- **Agglomeration effect:** Many businesses gain efficiencies by locating near each other;
- **Access to transit:** Multi-modal access widens the possible labour shed;
- **Access to highways:** Notwithstanding the importance to transit, locations outside Toronto typically rely on highway access for accessibility for tenants/employees;
- **Exposure and visibility:** Office/signage visibility to the traveling public is an important consideration for businesses who use their real estate as part of their marketing strategy;
- **Surface parking and large lots:** Many prospective tenants still value access to affordable (or free) parking. It is particularly important where high-order transit is not within walking distance or is not expansive (e.g. one-way GO Rail Station). Office developers seek locations that can accommodate surface parking to reduce the significant costs associated with underground parking; and,
- **Regionally competitive pricing:** Overall, prospective tenants considering a suburban office location can be more difficult to

attract and may naturally expect to trade off walkability and other positive locational attributes for reduced monthly rent.

East Gwillimbury only checks the box of a few of the above drivers – access to highways, large lots, and (potentially) regionally competitive pricing. Given this, attracting major office is likely to be a challenge which is reflected in the Region’s forecasts for MOE.

### 5.3.3 Impact of COVID-19

While employment conditions in 2020-21 will be challenged as a result of COVID-19, it is expected that FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate), manufacturing, innovation and technology, warehousing and distribution sectors, as well as support services, are more likely to recover in a shorter period of time relative to other industries.

As a result of the pandemic, short-term demand for office space across the GTA may stall, resulting in higher vacancies and reduced office investment interest over the short-term.

We also expect that COVID-19 could result in permanent changes to the nature of work. This could involve increased work-from-home and telecommuting, which would further reduce demand for physical office space moving forward.

On the other hand, some economists predict that COVID-19 might increase demand for office space as companies seek to create ‘flex’ satellite offices in suburban areas to reduce long periods of exposure on transit and the time lost to commuting that employees currently enjoy while working from home, as well as the creation of less dense office environments.

### 5.3.4 Implications for East Gwillimbury Land Needs and Official Plan Policies

East Gwillimbury’s market is much better positioned to attract a wide variety of ELE and PRE, rather than MOE. Notwithstanding this, it is likely that over the next 30 years the Town will attract some level of interest for MOE. As such, **we view the Region’s allocation of 500 MOE jobs to East Gwillimbury as being reasonable.** This investment would likely come through several modest buildings, rather than one or two larger projects. If the market for MOE shifts looking forward, a higher allocation of MOE will be necessary through future Land Needs Assessments.

To maximize the potential for MOE, East Gwillimbury should plan for this investment in three ways:

- Adjacent the East Gwillimbury GO Station to leverage the transit infrastructure and future transit improvements;
- Within a mixed-use context along Green Lane, or other strategic nodes; and/or
- Within existing/future Employment Areas.

We believe that the best opportunity lies within the vacant Queensville and ROPA 1 EAs, as well as the remaining lands within the Green Lane EA. These lands will have strong accessibility / visibility from Highway 404, offer large parcels capable of accommodating mid-rise buildings with surface parking, can offer a more cost-effective investment opportunity relative to other GTA municipalities, and have the potential to be master planned from a vacant/greenfield condition.

## 5.4 Employment Land Employment

The type of sectors to locate in Employment Areas ('EA') across the GTA vary widely, but generally include a range of heavy and light industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, self-storage, outdoor storage, industrial services (e.g. auto repair), ancillary office and commercial space, commercial and retail uses, and other similar functions. Some EAs also accommodate higher intensity / employment dense uses such as stand-alone office buildings, professional services seeking cost effective workplace solutions, the technology sector, creative uses, and many others.

The following provides an overview of what drives investment in ELE, types of ELE East Gwillimbury should expect and the associated density of this investment, and considerations for how the Town should plan for these uses looking forward.

### 5.4.1 Factors Driving Employment Land Demand

The factors that influence the development of / demand for industrial properties can be varied and complex. However, the following factors have the greatest influence:

- **Location:** proximity to markets and suppliers, transportation links, prestige and character, 400 series highway exposure;
- **Property Characteristics:** Property size, accessibility from major roads and highways, grading, servicing;
- **Land Use Compatibility:** Conflicts with sensitive land uses that might impact the use of a property for industrial functions (e.g. residential, retail);

- **Long Term Operating Environment:** Rent, taxes, utilities, and labour; and,
- **Development Costs:** Development charges, land value.

Access to labour has become less important over time in making locational decisions for the industrial market due to lower job densities and increasing reliance on automation. As a result, industrial developers are often the first to move to the edge or outside of a major urban centre if these areas have both positive locational attributes and lower land values – like East Gwillimbury.

### 5.4.2 East Gwillimbury's ELE Market

East Gwillimbury is at an interesting point in its development history as it continues to urbanize. The Town's employment growth has been concentrated within the construction and transportation / warehousing sectors. Outside of investment by York Region in the public administration sector (Regional offices in the Bales EA), it is likely that these two sectors combine for the vast majority of employment growth in the Town's EAs, with some retail and wholesale investment also occurring.

East Gwillimbury is also in an enviable position in the GTHA as they have approximately 270 net hectares (670 acres) of vacant employment land that is immediately adjacent Highway 404 in the Queensville and ROPA 1 EAs.

Further, a new highway is proposed at the north end of the Town that will connect Highway 404 with Highway 400 to the west. As illustrated by Figure 6 on page 26, a significant amount of

employment land is also proposed to be included adjacent this new highway in the future.

The availability of such a large swath of vacant employment land adjacent to this highway system should attract a wide variety of ELE once servicing issues are solved. The future Highway 404-400 connecting link will further enhance the accessibility of these lands and their attractiveness for ELE employment.

As highway adjacent employment land in the central GTA continues to be exhausted and increase in price, lands such as East Gwillimbury's EAs should only grow in popularity.

#### 5.4.3 Expected ELE Typologies and Densities

Looking forward, it is likely that East Gwillimbury's vacant employment lands begin to see a mix of ELE. This could include large warehouse and distribution facilities that accommodate densities as low as 5 to 10 jobs per hectare, as well as higher employment uses such as those observed in EAs along the Highway 404 corridor in other York Region municipalities.

The employment density observed in York Region's other Highway 404 EAs include:

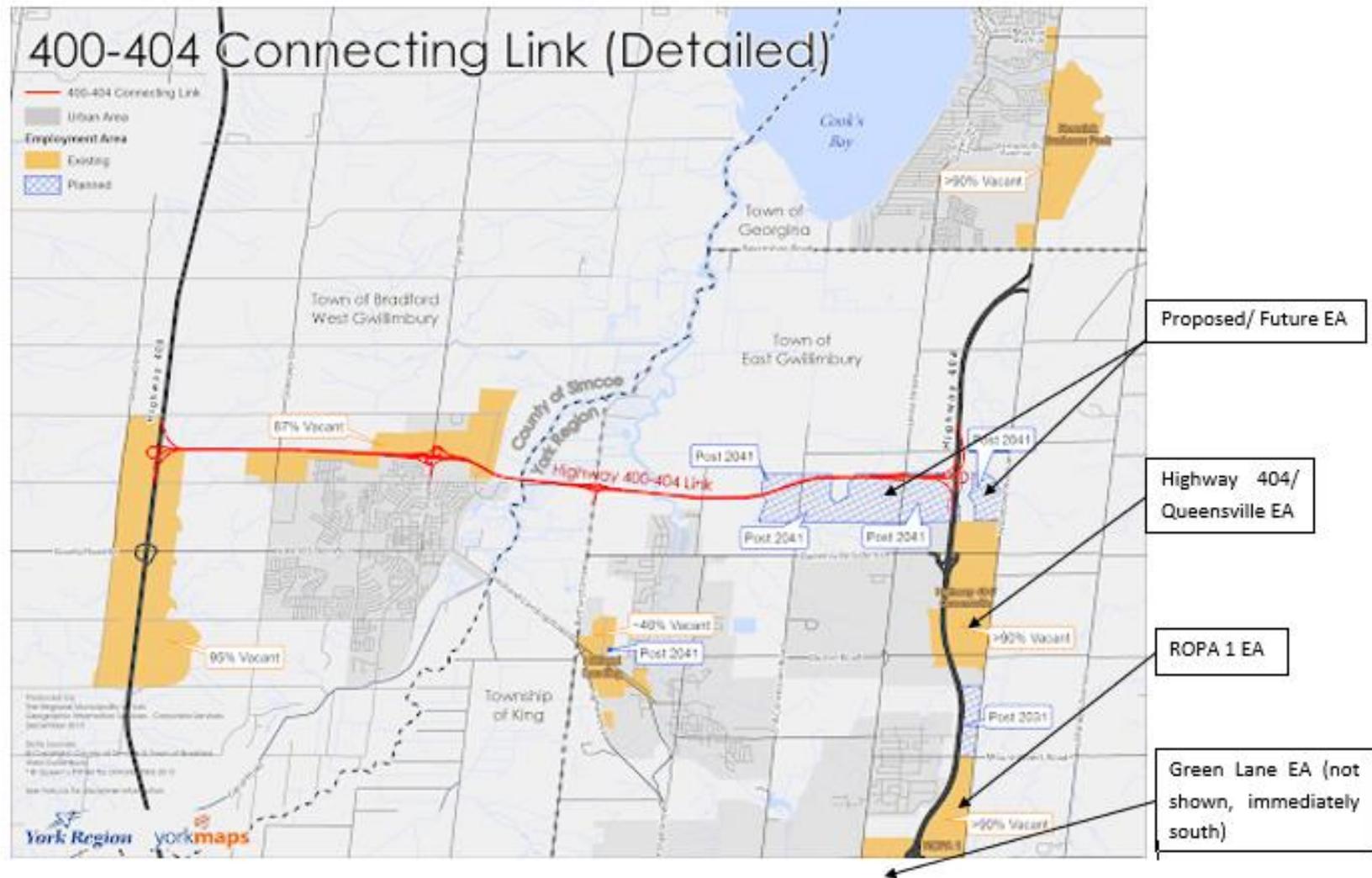
- Newmarket Leslie North EA: 56 jobs per hectare (This EA is immediately south of the Green Lane and ROPA 1 EA);
- Newmarket Leslie/Davis EA: 65 jobs per hectare;
- Newmarket Leslie South EA: 76 jobs per hectare (highly diverse employment, including major office, education, health care, and other non-industrial employment);

- Newmarket Leslie/Mulock EA: 50 jobs per hectare;
- Aurora 2C EA: Currently vacant but planned to accommodate 50 jobs per hectare; and,
- Aurora Wellington/Highway 404 EA: 78 jobs per hectare (40% of employment in the EA is major office).

Overall, we believe that East Gwillimbury's vacant EAs are positioned to capture a wide range of possible ELE typologies. It is likely that these lands will capture large warehouses and distribution facilities given their highway access, value proposition, and limited supply of large vacant properties with similar characteristics in more central locations. These large facilities with relatively low employment densities are commonplace in the current industrial market, especially for large swaths of vacant highway adjacent land. However, it is also likely that these areas all capture more compact industrial development like what is observed in the Green Lane EA and other areas of York Region along Highway 404.

Given the above, the vacant employment lands in East Gwillimbury are likely to attract a variety of employment uses that include densities in the range of 35 to 55 jobs per net hectare. This range of employment uses should ensure that **the Region's forecast of 45 jobs per net hectare for employment land in the DGA and 40 jobs per net hectare in the Whitebelt are reasonable targets.**

Figure 6



#### 5.4.4 Implications for Official Plan Policies

Overall, policies in the Official Plan should be flexible to allow for a wide range of ELE, however attention must be paid to the outcomes envisioned for the area. For example, large outdoor industrial storage and heavy industrial uses can negatively affect an area's desirability for higher intensity employment uses. A vision for each EA must be developed to ensure the vision and policy framework match market and economic realities and demand characteristics. Two or more employment land designations should therefore be created as the Official Plan review continues to account for these nuances. Considerations will include:

- Heavy industry and outdoor storage;
- Location for retail and services, including maximum caps and thresholds where appropriate;
- Strong policy language to protect EAs from sensitive land uses and conversions;
- Solving servicing and other challenges to create development ready lands;
- Flexible policy approach to allow for a variety of outcomes over the long-term; and
- Consultation with landowners and industry stakeholders through the Official Plan review.

## 6.0 Land Capacity Analysis

As noted throughout this report, the findings of our employment and residential research indicate that the Region's assumptions related to densities are reasonable.

Our research has demonstrated the following:

- Despite the low population densities associated with current development applications, residential uses are likely to increase in density over the growth timeline as demonstrated elsewhere in the Region with shrinking lot sizes and increased interest in medium and high-density built forms in response to increasing land values and home prices;
- A number of areas elsewhere in York Region that are similarly located or include a similar unit mix to that forecast for East Gwillimbury are achieving comparable or higher community land densities. In some cases, the market has already been delivering similar or higher densities despite having been planned prior to the current Provincial/Regional minimum density targets;
- Employment densities can vary greatly. However, the forecasts for East Gwillimbury's existing EAs are generally in line with what is already occurring in the Town;
- East Gwillimbury's two vacant EAs are forecast to have a higher employment density than most other existing EAs in the Town. However, the forecasted densities are in line with, or in some cases lower than, other highway adjacent EAs in York Region.

Given the above, we do not believe that additional Whitebelt lands will be required to accommodate growth to 2041 based on the total population and employment forecasts. Table 9, on the next page, provides a summary of the growth allocation for East Gwillimbury to 2041 based on York Region's previous MCR, illustrating how the population and employment growth will be distributed. These numbers utilize the Region's density targets, along with the 4% intensification rate for the built-up area.

The remaining 777 net hectares of Whitebelt lands that have not been earmarked for 2036 to 2041 growth will be key to the 2041 to 2051 growth timeline that the Region is currently planning for in their ongoing MCR.

### 6.1 Build-Out Capacity

Table 10 on the next page provides an estimate of the Town's population and employment capacity upon full build-out, utilizing the Region's density and intensification assumptions across the entirety of the 999 net hectares of Whitebelt lands.

Overall, the capacity analysis yields the following population and employment totals:

- **Total population of 135,766 residents;**
  - 15,613 residents in the existing BUA;
  - 78,440 residents in the existing DGA;

**Table 9**

<b>Capacity Analysis</b>			
<b>York Region 2041 Assumptions - Limited Whitebelt Development</b>			
	<b>Net Land Area (ha)</b>	<b>Density</b>	<b>Pop/Jobs Capacity</b>
<b>Built Up Area</b>			
Population	n/a	n/a	14,370
Jobs (Community + ELE)	n/a	n/a	2,940
<b>Total (BUA Lands):</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>17,310</b>
<b>Designated Greenfield Area</b>			
Community Land	1,400	64	89,600
<i>Population</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>78,440</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>11,160</i>
Employment Land	419	45	18,820
<b>Total (DGA Lands):</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>108,420</b>
<b>Whitebelt Lands</b>			
Community Land	181	74	13,380
<i>Population</i>	<i>181</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>11,890</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>181</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1,490</i>
Employment Land	42	40	1,690
<b>Total (Whitebelt Lands):</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>15,070</b>
<b>Total:</b>			<b>140,800</b>
<b>Total Population:</b>			<b>104,700</b>
<b>Total Jobs:</b>			<b>36,100</b>
<i>Note: Net developable area for BUA unavailable at time of writing.</i>			

**Table 10**

<b>Capacity Analysis</b>			
<b>Full Whitebelt Build Out</b>			
	<b>Land Area (ha)</b>	<b>Density</b>	<b>Pop/Jobs Capacity</b>
<b>Built Up Area</b>			
Population	n/a	n/a	15,613
Jobs (Community + ELE)	n/a	n/a	3,636
<b>Total (BUA Lands):</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>19,248</b>
<b>Designated Greenfield Area</b>			
Community Land	1,400	64	89,600
<i>Population</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>78,440</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>11,160</i>
Employment Land	419	45	18,820
<b>Total (DGA Lands):</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>108,420</b>
<b>Whitebelt Lands</b>			
Community Land	635	74	46,941
<i>Population</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>41,714</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>5,227</i>
Employment Land	364	40	14,647
<b>Total (Whitebelt Lands):</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>61,588</b>
<b>Total:</b>			<b>189,256</b>
<b>Total Population:</b>			<b>135,766</b>
<b>Total Jobs:</b>			<b>53,490</b>
<i>Note: Net developable area for BUA unavailable at time of writing. BUA population and jobs based on 4% intensification rate set by York Region as part of 2016 to 2041 growth timeline.</i>			

- 41,714 residents in the Whitebelt;
- **Total employment of 53,490 jobs;**
  - 3,636 jobs in the BUA (PRE and ELE);
  - 11,160 PRE jobs in the DGA;
  - 18,820 ELE jobs in the DGA;
  - 5,227 PRE jobs in the Whitebelt;
  - 14,647 ELE jobs in the Whitebelt.

The full build-out capacity represents an increase of 31,066 residents (+30%) and 17,390 jobs (+48%) from the 2041 allocation. While this represents a higher 10-year total job growth than the previous 10-year period (16,200 jobs, +81%), it is a lower rate of population growth compared to the 2031 to 2041 period (41,100 persons, +65%).

It is likely that the capacity of these lands could be higher than what has been demonstrated in Table 10.

We would expect that densities will be increased for development lands beyond 2041 as the market in East Gwillimbury continues to shift, similar to that observed and forecasted to occur for the Whitebelt land to be developed after 2036. The intensification rate is also likely to increase as infill townhouse, stacked townhouse, and apartment development becomes more common in the municipality.

## 6.2 Building Out the Whitebelt to 2041

The Town of East Gwillimbury has noted that they are interested in developing additional, if not all, of the Whitebelt lands to accommodate growth to 2041. However, to do so, population and employment densities would have to be reduced significantly from the Region's assumptions to accommodate the allocated growth in this forecast period

Table 11 illustrates an example of how the Whitebelt could be built out and associated densities using the 2041 growth allocations from the Region. The reduced densities include:

- Population densities in the DGA and Whitebelt reduced from 56 and 66 persons per net hectare, respectively, to an average of 44 persons per net hectare;
- Employment land densities in the DGA and Whitebelt reduced from 45 and 40 jobs per net hectare, respectively, to 24 jobs per net hectare; and,
- PRE jobs reduced from 8 jobs per net hectare to 7 jobs per net hectare in response to the reduced population in these areas.

Based on our research and analysis of other comparable community and employment areas within York Region, there is no evidence to suggest that these lower population and employment densities are realistic.

**Table 11**

<b>Capacity Analysis</b>			
<b>Full Whitebelt Build Out to 2041</b>			
	<b>Land Area (ha)</b>	<b>Density</b>	<b>Pop/Jobs Capacity</b>
<b>Built Up Area</b>			
Population	n/a	n/a	14,370
Jobs (Community + ELE)	n/a	n/a	2,940
<b>Total (BUA Lands):</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>17,310</b>
<b>Designated Greenfield Area</b>			
Community Land	1,400	51	72,008
<i>Population</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>62,143</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>1,400</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>9,864</i>
Employment Land	419	24	10,072
<b>Total (DGA Lands):</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>82,079</b>
<b>Whitebelt Lands</b>			
<i>Community Land</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>32,661</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>28,187</i>
<i>Jobs</i>	<i>635</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>4,474</i>
<i>Employment Land</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>8,750</i>
<b>Total (Whitebelt Lands):</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41,410</b>
<b>Total:</b>			<b>140,800</b>
<b>Total Population:</b>			<b>104,700</b>
<b>Total Jobs:</b>			<b>36,100</b>
<i>Note: Net developable area for BUA unavailable at time of writing.</i>			

It is also important to consider that there are consequences to opening up all of the Whitebelt lands for development over the next 20 years and building out at a lower density. Some of these issues will pose challenges to future flexibility and strategic long-term planning:

- Lower densities limit the overall population and employment growth potential of the Town during the growth timeline and beyond;
- Utilizing more – or all – of the Whitebelt lands by 2041 may require increased intensification in the future – which is currently less marketable in East Gwillimbury than greenfield development;
- If a market for higher density residential uses (apartments, stacked townhouses) – which are appropriate for infill / intensification purposes – does not form in a significant manner, future growth could stagnate beyond the growth timeline if the DGA and Whitebelt is built-out over a shorter timeline;
- Lower employment densities mean fewer jobs over the long-term without significant intensification;
- Lower densities mean fewer households and businesses paying property taxes, putting an increased strain on municipal services and increasing service costs per capita;
- Decreased land availability could increase pressure to encroach on protected greenbelt / natural heritage lands; and,

- Utilizing all Whitebelt lands to accommodate 2041 growth at lower densities may contradict some of the Town's own goals, including for higher densities in the Green Lane Secondary Plan area.

Given the above, to justify the development of all Whitebelt lands to accommodate growth to 2041, the number of residents and jobs forecast for the Town would have to increase significantly beyond what the Region has allocated in order to align with more realistic densities similar to the Region's initial targets. While increased growth may be possible, an analysis of whether further growth during this timeline is justified is not within the scope of this work.

A significant change to the Town's growth allocations would also have an impact on growth allocations elsewhere in the Region given that the Regional allocation is set by the Province in the Growth Plan. It would also require additional research on important growth management items like servicing capacity and timelines in East Gwillimbury.

It is therefore most likely that the Town's remaining Whitebelt lands be accounted for through increased growth allocations over the 2041 to 2051 period.

## 7.0 Summary

From a residential and employment market perspective, our research has indicated that York Region was generally justified in many of their density and intensification assumptions for East Gwillimbury. The Region's assumptions balance the fact that East Gwillimbury will develop as a low-density residential community in the coming decades while also ensuring that land is available for growth beyond the 2041 timeline.

While the build out could occur differently than forecast – which could impact land needs – the growth and market trends elsewhere in York Region point to the current assumptions being a more likely outcome.

As the Region completes their current MCR, we would expect that much of the remaining Whitebelt lands will be proposed to be added to the DGA as part of an urban boundary expansion for the extended 2051 growth timeline.

As noted, full build-out of the Whitebelt lands under the current density assumptions will only see an increase of 31,000 residents beyond 2041, a lower amount of population growth than between 2031 and 2041. Even with further Whitebelt land available for development in the future, we would expect that density and intensification targets will need to be increased to accommodate new residents and jobs in East Gwillimbury through the new 2051 growth timeline and beyond.

# Appendix A: Population and Residential Uses Background Study

Land Needs Assessment Background Study:  
Population and Residential Uses

Town of East Gwillimbury  
December 2020

# Land Needs Assessment Background Study:

## Population and Residential Growth

### Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	37
2.0	Drivers of Population Growth and Residential Demand.....	38
3.0	East Gwillimbury Population and Residential Profile.....	43
4.0	York Region Baseline and Projections for East Gwillimbury .....	47
5.0	Residential Market Context .....	55
6.0	East Gwillimbury Proposed Supply .....	60
7.0	Reconciling Market Realities and Regional Density Targets .....	64
8.0	Density Conclusions and Final Thoughts.....	72

*The conclusions contained within this report have been prepared based on both primary and secondary data sources. NBLC makes every effort to ensure the data is correct but cannot guarantee its accuracy. It is also important to note that it is not possible to fully document all factors or account for all changes that may occur in the future and influence the viability of any development. NBLC therefore assumes no responsibility for losses sustained as a result of implementing any recommendation provided in this report.*

*This report has been prepared solely for the purposes outlined herein and is not to be relied upon, or used for any other purposes, or by any other party without the prior written authorization from N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited.*

# 1.0 Introduction

N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd. (‘NBLC’) was retained by the Town of East Gwillimbury (‘the Town’) as part of a larger multi-disciplinary team, led by The Planning Partnership (‘TPP’), tasked with undertaking an Official Plan Review (‘OPR’) for the Town.

As part of the OPR, NBLC was tasked with completing a Land Needs Assessment and Capacity Analysis to evaluate the assumptions in York Region’s most recent Municipal Comprehensive Review (‘MCR’) for East Gwillimbury (2015), and to estimate the population and jobs that would require full build-out of the Town’s Whitebelt lands.

As part of the Land Needs Assessment and Capacity Analysis, we have completed two background reports that summarize our research. This background report assesses population and residential growth. Employment land, major office, and population-related employment is assessed under separate cover.

This population and residential growth background report provides an overview of drivers of population and residential growth, summarizes the Region’s most recent growth assumptions for East Gwillimbury, and profiles East Gwillimbury’s existing population and residential base as well as the current residential market context. The report concludes by reconciling the Town’s market context with the Region’s growth assumptions.

The findings of this report and the employment background report will help to inform the assumptions in our capacity analysis to

provide guidance to the Town on what may be considered a reasonable assumption for future build-out of available development lands and how much land may be required to accommodate the growth previously forecast for the Town of East Gwillimbury.

**Figure 1: East Gwillimbury Homes**



*Source: Advantage EG (top), Condo King (bottom)*

## 2.0 Drivers of Population Growth and Residential Demand

The following section focuses on some of the key drivers of population growth and residential demand. These will be important to consider in the context of the Town of East Gwillimbury and how it may grow in the coming decades.

### 2.1 Macro Drivers of Population Growth

On a macro-level, there are four primary drivers of population growth:

- **Fertility Rates:** Over the last several decades fertility rates have been dropping across the world. Slowing fertility rates mean slower – or negative – population growth without some other intervention like immigration. In Canada, fertility rates declined to just 1.47 births per woman in 2019, compared to 3.94 births 50 years prior, well below the replacement rate of 2.1 births for the current population to replace itself<sup>1</sup>.
- **Life Expectancy / Mortality Rates:** While fertility rates are declining, life expectancy has increased over the past several decades. Areas with higher life expectancies will generally have larger populations, if all else remains equal.
- **Migration/Immigration:** As fertility rates have declined in Canada, the country has become more reliant on immigration to drive population growth. At a more micro-scale in the

Greater Toronto Area ('GTA') including York Region, population growth is driven by a combination of international immigration and migration from other parts of Ontario and Canada. Migration and immigration can not only increase the population size, but also change the demographics of a population from a cultural and age perspective.

- **Population Structure:** Finally, the structure of the current (and future) population also plays an important role in whether a population is likely to grow. If the existing population is older and the area tends to only attract older residents through migration, the population is unlikely to grow at a rapid rate over the long-term. However, if the base population consists of a large proportion of family-aged residents and can attract additional residents of this demographic, the population is likely to grow more rapidly as they expand their households.

### 2.2 Drivers of Residential Demand

The factors that drive population growth and residential demand are wide-ranging and can include a long list of items depending on the location and market in question. These factors can not only drive – or inhibit – demand for residential uses but also what type

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada - Canada's total fertility rate hits a record low, Sept 29, 2020

of residential uses are in demand (e.g. low-density vs high-density). The following provides a summary of some of these drivers.

### 2.2.1 Population-Related Factors

- **Demographics:** There are several demographic trends that have a direct bearing on the magnitude and composition of residential demand. These include:
  - Society is aging, but the older population is healthier and living longer than ever. As such, senior cohorts are staying in single-family homes longer than in the past. When they do move, they are choosing to downsize to condominium or rental apartments, often in walkable urban communities, rather than traditional retirement homes.
  - Households are forming later in life and couples are generally waiting longer before having (fewer) children, leading to smaller household sizes. This trend has helped drive demand for alternatives to single-detached homes such as condominium apartments, townhomes and stacked townhomes. Smaller household sizes will also drive demand for more homes, as fewer people are occupying a single home;
  - As noted, the GTA attracts a large proportion of new immigrants. New Canadians play a vital role in the housing market, first contributing to rental demand, then eventually to property ownership.

- **Continued Demand for Suburban Living:** We have seen a shift in lifestyle priorities in recent years, with an increasing number of people seeking a more urban lifestyle, favouring neighbourhoods that prioritize walkability, convenience, short commutes, and lower maintenance living. However, traditional single-family living in more suburban contexts remains attractive to a large segment of the population. As municipalities to the south continue to build out at increasingly higher densities, places like East Gwillimbury stand to benefit as buyers look elsewhere for a certain lifestyle. Other buyers may also prefer a small-town lifestyle that East Gwillimbury can offer that places like Toronto, Markham, Vaughan, and Mississauga cannot.

### 2.2.2 Economic-Related Factors

A stable economy is a key driver of residential demand. There are a number of economic-related factors that can drive – or inhibit – residential demand, including:

- **Employment Growth:** A growing employment base is a key driver of population growth, and in turn residential demand. If an employment base is declining, residential demand is likely to be weak as fewer people are migrating to the area. This is often a regional factor – not just a local one – as many people will commute while living in an adjacent community that better meets their lifestyle or financial needs.
- **Housing Affordability:** As prices for residential units rise – whether in the ownership or rental market – household decisions on where to live are impacted, shifting residential

demand. As one community becomes too expensive for the desired housing type, households consider other surrounding communities where housing may be more affordable – sometimes known as “driving to qualify”. At the same time, increasing prices influence what type of housing is in demand – shifting from single-detached to townhouses/apartments or from ownership to rental as affordability erodes

- **Interest Rates:** Directly linked to affordability, interest rates play a significant role in shaping residential demand. As interest rates drop, the potential buyer pool expands as more households can qualify to purchase a home. Similarly, as interest rates increase, fewer households may be in the market to purchase a home. At the same time, some of the benefit of lower rates for affordability can be offset by increased prices driven by the higher demand.
- **Land Availability:** As the amount of land available for new development declines, supply is constricted and pricing tends to increase. This is particularly notable for low-density housing types like single-detached homes given the significant land requirement.

### 2.2.3 Government Policy

The Growth Plan establishes long term planning objectives related to the location of new growth and allocation of resources. The Growth Plan directs major growth to Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe which are to be planned for a broad

range of land uses, including major transit infrastructure, high-density employment, and population growth.

Other provincial policy documents, such as the Provincial Policy Statement (“PPS”), also include policies that shape land use planning throughout the Province, while regional and municipal Official Plans adhere to provincial policy, giving further direction to where growth should occur.

Beyond this, there is also other Provincial legislation like the Greenbelt Act, which protects the Greenbelt area in the GTA and has an impact on the overall housing market. The restrictions that the Greenbelt Act puts on outward growth through the protection of the Greenbelt limits the amount of land available for low-density residential development.

Finally, while not falling within the category of policy, government decisions / spending on where servicing occurs also shapes the housing market. While some municipalities may have significant greenfield lands available, if they are not serviced, they will not be developed in the near-term, shifting demand to other communities.

### 2.2.4 Locational Factors

In addition to the above, there are also several locational factors that drive demand for residential units at a more micro-level, whether it be to specific municipalities or specific neighbourhoods within a municipality. This includes the following:

- **Proximity to Employment:** Being proximate to employment opportunities is a key driver of residential demand, particularly as the GTA becomes more congested. More people are prioritizing living close to work than in recent decades. This has been a key driver of the recent shift back towards Downtown living in Toronto and key intensification nodes in York and Peel.
- **Transit:** Access to transit is one of the most significant drivers of residential demand in the GTA. The proposed GO service enhancements planned for East Gwillimbury will increase the appeal of the community to a broader pool of households.
- **Highway Access:** In East Gwillimbury, much of the land supply is a short distance from Highway 404. Highway access is critical for travelling to and from jobs. It is also crucial in terms of attracting employment uses which support residential demand. Plans for a new highway connecting Highway 404 and 400 through East Gwillimbury should only increase the appeal of the Town for residential uses.
- **Retail / Everyday Needs:** Areas that have easy access to a variety of retail uses that serve everyday needs – particularly grocery stores and pharmacies – tend to feature residential demand. These types of uses also tend to follow new residential development.
- **Schools:** As families choose where to live, being close to schools – particularly those with a good reputation and high test scores – is a major deciding factor. Schools also have the

ability to drive demand for residential uses from employees (teachers, staff, etc).

- **Healthcare Facilities:** Being located close to healthcare facilities – including hospitals and medical offices – is an important consideration for many people, particularly older residents. Hospitals can also drive demand for residential uses from employees – more so than schools given requirements of some physicians and nurses to live within a certain distance of the facility.

### 2.3 COVID 19 and Market Demand

The COVID-19 pandemic is leading to significant changes in the way we work and live and will undoubtedly impact the types and location of housing that people seek in the future.

While the GTA housing market, across all product types has been remarkably robust through 2020 there has been growing weakness in small apartment demand – especially in Toronto’s Downtown core. At the same time, by any metric, demand for low-density housing in suburban communities such as East Gwillimbury has continued to grow. This demand has been driven by:

- People accelerating purchasing decisions as they seek more personal space;
- An increase in the number of companies that are allowing employees to work from home – in some cases permanently;

- Young renters moving home with parents either due to concerns associated with the pandemic or job loss, softening demand for high-density units in urban centres; and,
- Reduced demand for apartments from post-secondary students and hourly workers – two key groups driving high-density residential demand.

It remains to be seen if these influences will result in a permanent shift in the housing market. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is, for example, forecasting that as federal financial supports wind down and the impact on permanent jobs is felt, demand for housing will decline along with pricing in 2021.

It seems logical however, with today’s technology, more people will have the flexibility to work at home which will only strengthen demand for larger homes. Despite CMHC’s near-term forecast, the longer term effects of the pandemic are to further fuel demand in communities like East Gwillimbury where there is a significant amount of greenfield land available for medium and low-density forms of development and pricing is generally lower relative to similar product in municipalities to the south (Vaughan, Markham, Toronto, etc).

Notwithstanding the above, we still expect intensification in the GTA to continue in the coming decades and for high-density residential uses in urban areas to continue to account for an increasing portion of regional housing starts. The attractiveness of living in urban centres goes well beyond just being close to employment. The reduced demand for high-density units is likely a

short-term impact, particularly given the increasing prices for low-density residential product throughout the GTA.

## 2.4 How Does This Relate to East Gwillimbury?

The Town of East Gwillimbury has a strategic advantage in terms of land availability for new low-rise residential development. Many of the larger communities in the GTA are quickly running out of available greenfield land, leading to their shift towards higher densities.

Increasing residential prices elsewhere in the GTA, including in other York Region communities like Markham, Vaughan, Aurora, and Newmarket, also provide East Gwillimbury with an affordability advantage. Housing is generally priced at a more attainable price point, and with increasing work from home flexibility, could create a situation where more buyers consider East Gwillimbury when making a purchasing decision.

Finally, improved highway access and further employment growth should also provide East Gwillimbury with a strategic advantage that will drive population growth and residential demand.

Notwithstanding the above, East Gwillimbury does not currently feature many of the drivers of higher density residential demand – like transit access, walkable neighbourhoods, and high employment concentrations. This will likely ensure that the Town remains a predominantly low-density community for the foreseeable future. Assets like highway access noted above are also key drivers for suburban, low-rise residential development.

## 3.0 East Gwillimbury Population and Residential Profile

The following summarizes key information on the Town of East Gwillimbury’s current population and residential profile, utilizing the most recent demographic data from Statistics Canada. Where appropriate, we will compare the data for East Gwillimbury to the Toronto CMA (“the CMA”) and Province of Ontario.

### 3.1 Population Distribution is Similar to Ontario

In 2016, the Town of East Gwillimbury was home to just under 24,000 residents. This represented growth of 14% from 10 years earlier in 2006 – a higher rate of growth than Ontario (+11%), though slightly lower than the CMA average of 16% during the same period.

The Town’s population distribution is illustrated in Table 1. This distribution is very similar to that of the CMA and Ontario.

**Table 1**

Population Distribution and Change Town of East Gwillimbury, 2006 and 2016						
Age Group	2016		2006		Change 06-16	
0-19 (Children)	5,625	23%	5,770	27%	-145	-3%
20-24 (Young Adults/Students)	1,490	6%	1,225	6%	265	22%
25-34 (Young Parents)	2,580	11%	1,865	9%	715	38%
35-54 (Move-Up Adults)	7,115	30%	7,425	35%	-310	-4%
55-64 (Early Downsizers)	3,705	15%	2,635	13%	1,070	41%
65-79 (Older Downsizers)	2,770	12%	1,770	8%	1,000	56%
80+ (Elderly)	710	3%	380	2%	330	87%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>23,995</b>	-	<b>21,070</b>	-	<b>2,925</b>	<b>14%</b>

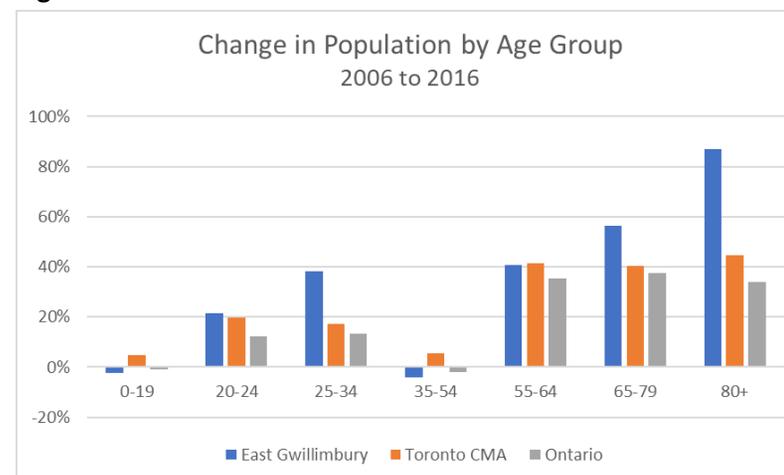
*Source: Statistics Canada*

### 3.2 Notable Growth Amongst Young Adults

The rate of recent growth for certain segments of the population in East Gwillimbury is notable.

First, residents aged 25 to 34 grew by 38% between 2006 and 2016, compared to 17% in the CMA and 13% in Ontario (Figure 2). This demographic represents young adults who are beginning to start families – many of whom are also first-time buyers, likely at least partially attracted to East Gwillimbury by its affordability. This increase could lead to an increase in the number of children in East Gwillimbury in the coming Census periods.

**Figure 2**



*Source: Statistics Canada*

The increase in the number of senior residents above the age of 65 is also notable. However, this is likely a product of natural aging and the fact that East Gwillimbury had a higher proportion of 55 to 65 year olds (65 to 75 in 2016) and lower proportion of 70+ year olds (80+ in 2016) in 2006 than the CMA and Ontario.

### **3.3 High Proportion of Multi-Generational Canadians**

Unlike elsewhere in the CMA and Ontario, there is little evidence of new Canadians being attracted to East Gwillimbury in large numbers. Just 18% of residents are immigrants, compared to nearly half across the Toronto CMA (46%) and 29% in Ontario.

Close to 60% of East Gwillimbury residents are at least third generation Canadians – compared to just 22% across the Toronto CMA and 45% in Ontario. Further, only 11% of residents identified as a visible minority in 2016 (51% in Toronto CMA, 29% in Ontario).

### **3.4 Internal Migration is a Key Driver of Growth**

Migration has been a significant driver of the growth East Gwillimbury has experienced in recent years. The 2016 Census noted that 22% of the Town's population moved to East Gwillimbury in the five preceding years. This is compared to just 17% in the Toronto CMA and across Ontario.

Almost all of these migrants (95%) to the Town are considered internal migrants (from Canada), 98% of which have come from elsewhere in Ontario. By contrast, just 60% of migrants between

the 2011 and 2016 Census periods in the CMA and 74% in Ontario are considered internal migrants.

### **3.5 Households Largely Consist of Families**

East Gwillimbury has a slightly higher average household size (2.9 persons per unit) than both the CMA (2.7) and Ontario (2.6).

Part of the reason for the larger average household size is that one-person households account for just 14% of all households in the Town, nearly half that of the CMA (24%) and Ontario (26%).

In East Gwillimbury, couples with children – traditional nuclear families – account for the highest proportion of households at 45%, above the CMA (39%) and Ontario (33%) averages. Couples without children also account for a higher proportion in the Town (32% vs 28%).

### **3.6 Incomes are Above Average**

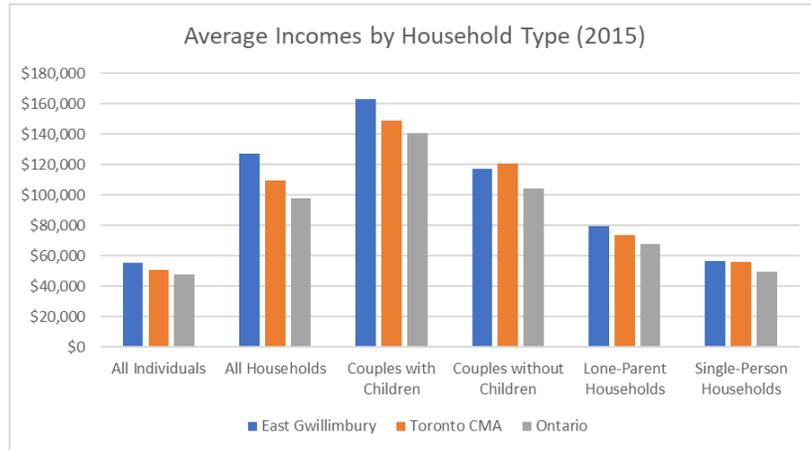
East Gwillimbury had higher average incomes than both the CMA and Ontario for individuals and households at the time of the last Census (Figure 3).

For household incomes, the higher average is partially attributed to the high proportion of couples with children households – which tend to have the highest incomes, on average.

Regardless of household type, East Gwillimbury tends to feature higher incomes almost across the board (as noted in Figure 3), and

features a higher proportion of households with incomes above \$100,000, \$150,000, and \$200,000.

**Figure 3**



Source: Statistics Canada

### 3.7 Housing is More Affordable for Residents

Higher incomes have an impact on housing affordability in East Gwillimbury. Despite a high proportion of single-family homes (see Section 3.8), fewer residents in the Town pay a disproportionate amount of income towards shelter than elsewhere in the CMA or Ontario.

If housing costs less than 30% of gross income, it is generally considered “affordable” for the household. In 2016, 23% of households in East Gwillimbury pay more than 30% of their income

on housing. This is lower than both the CMA (33%) and Ontario (28%) averages.

### 3.8 Housing is Primarily Single-Detached

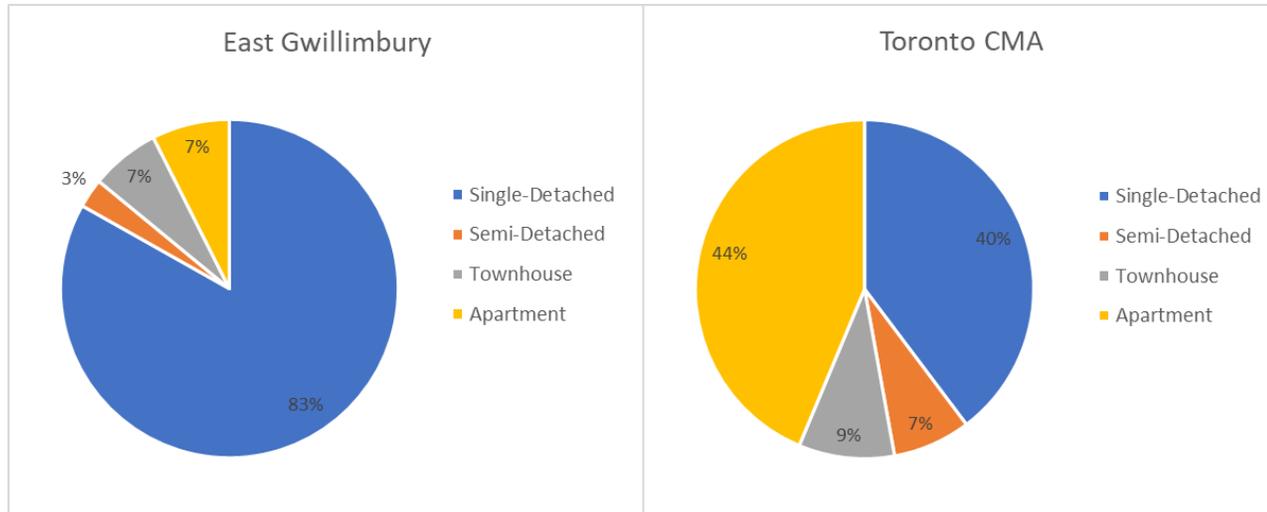
The existing housing stock in East Gwillimbury consists primarily of single-detached homes – representing 83% of all housing units in the Town. Combined with semi-detached and townhouse units, low-rise housing represents 93% of the housing stock in East Gwillimbury.

Apartments in East Gwillimbury represent just 7% of the total housing stock, with most of these units (53%) being located in duplex homes, with the remaining in buildings with fewer than 5-storeys. At the time of the 2016 Census, there were no apartment buildings in East Gwillimbury with more than 4-storeys.

By contrast, single-detached units across the Toronto CMA account for 40% of the total housing stock with apartments accounting for 44% of all units – highest amongst the four main housing types (see Figure 4).

Reflective of the large stock of low-rise homes, the lack of apartment units, and the high proportion of couples with children, 89% of housing units in the Town include at least three-bedrooms – compared to just 59% in the CMA.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Housing Types in East Gwillimbury and the Toronto CMA (2016 Census)**



Source: Statistics Canada

### 3.9 Freehold Ownership is Predominant Tenure

Reflective of the housing mix in the town, the large majority of households in East Gwillimbury are homeowners (89%), higher than both the CMA (66%) and in Ontario (70%).

Condominium tenure homes are also uncommon in East Gwillimbury, with just 1% of units noted as condominiums in 2016. Given the lack of apartments and low number of townhouses (7%), this is unsurprising, but is nonetheless a significant difference from elsewhere in the CMA where 21% of all housing units are condominium tenure.

While the number of rental households and condominium tenure units may increase in the coming years, this is a reflection of the type of housing that people expect to be able to live in when they move to East Gwillimbury.

## 4.0 York Region Baseline and Projections for East Gwillimbury

The following provides an overview of York Region’s most recent growth allocations for East Gwillimbury. This includes forecasts for population, housing units, intensification rates, and densities.

York Region completed their last Municipal Comprehensive Review (‘MCR’) in 2015, focused on a growth timeline of 2011 to 2041. The Region updated some of this data in 2019 for a growth timeline of 2016 to 2041. The bulk of the data herein is from this most recent update.

According to the previous MCR, future residential growth will be split between the following three areas in East Gwillimbury, illustrated in Figure 5.

- **Delineated Built-Up Area (‘BUA’):** All land within the limits of the developed urban area or the delineated built-up boundary. The BUA is tasked with absorbing growth associated with intensification (see Section 4.3);
- **Designated Greenfield Area (‘DGA’):** Lands within settlement areas (not including rural areas) but outside of delineated built-up areas that have been designated in the Official Plan for development and are required to accommodate forecasted growth to the current growth horizon; and,

- **Whitebelt Lands:** The lands between the outer edges of the approved settlement area (BUA and DGA). An MCR and urban boundary expansion is required for these lands to be added to the DGA for development. Without an urban boundary expansion, these lands cannot be developed.

In addition to the BUA lands that will accommodate the Town’s modest intensification<sup>2</sup>, York Region had identified 1,400 net hectares<sup>3</sup> of DGA land in East Gwillimbury to be utilized for “community” growth – which includes not only residential development, but also population-related jobs<sup>4</sup>.

An additional 635 net hectares of Whitebelt lands have also been identified as a potential location for future community uses, as required, as part of any future urban boundary expansions.

The Region’s work noted that the 1,400 net hectares of DGA lands will only accommodate community growth to 2036, requiring Whitebelt land to be added to the DGA for new development thereafter. To accommodate the growth allocated to the Town after 2036, the Region determined that 181 net hectares of Whitebelt land would be required to meet the 2041 population target. Figure 6 illustrates the location of the Whitebelt lands proposed to be part of the future urban boundary expansion.

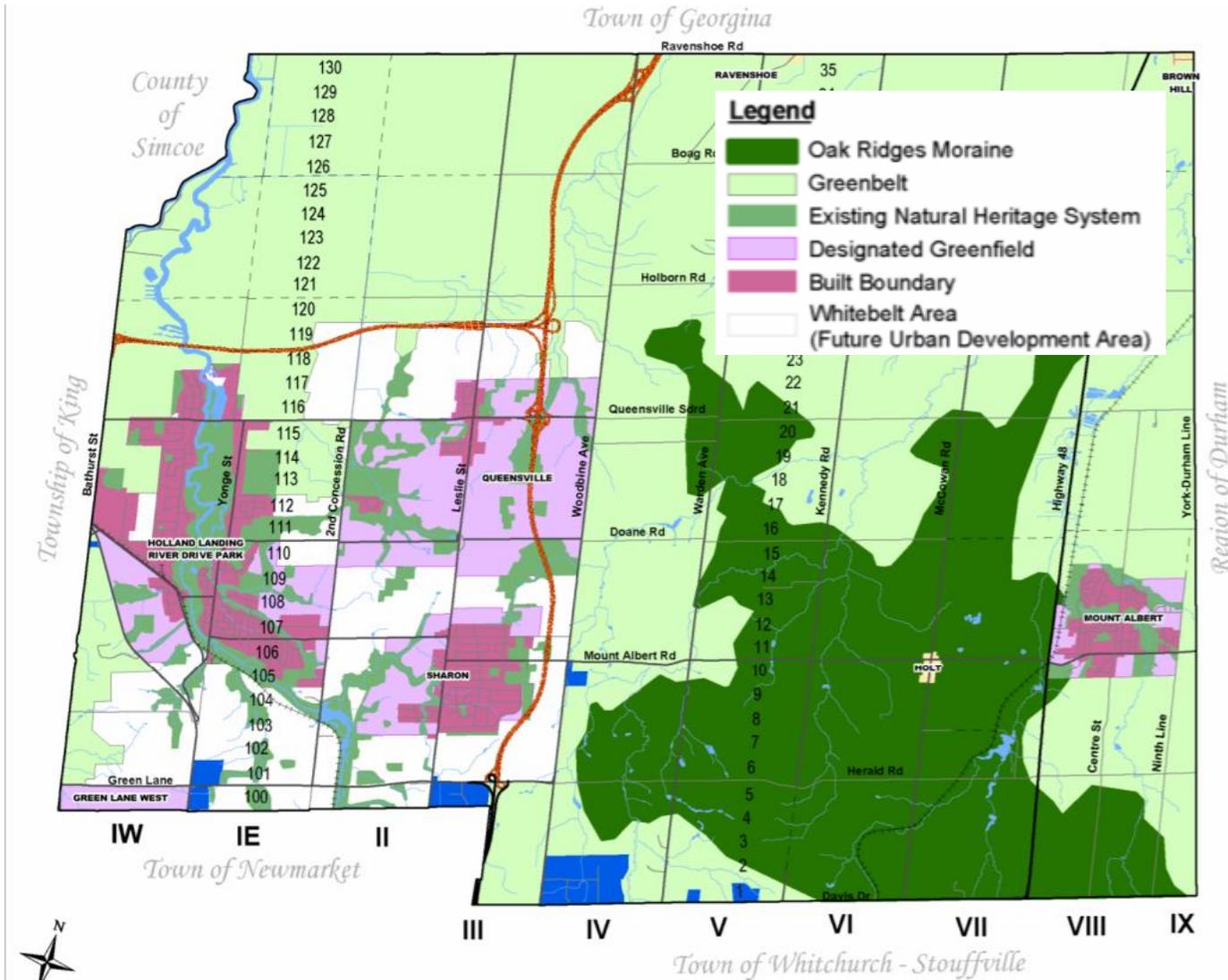
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<sup>2</sup> The land area of the BUA is not identified in the Region’s MCR work. However, mapping by TPP estimates that it includes 1,523 gross hectares for both community and employment uses

<sup>3</sup> The Growth Plan measures net hectares – the developable area – as excluding natural heritage areas, rights of way for electricity/energy lines, freeways, railways, employment areas, and cemeteries.

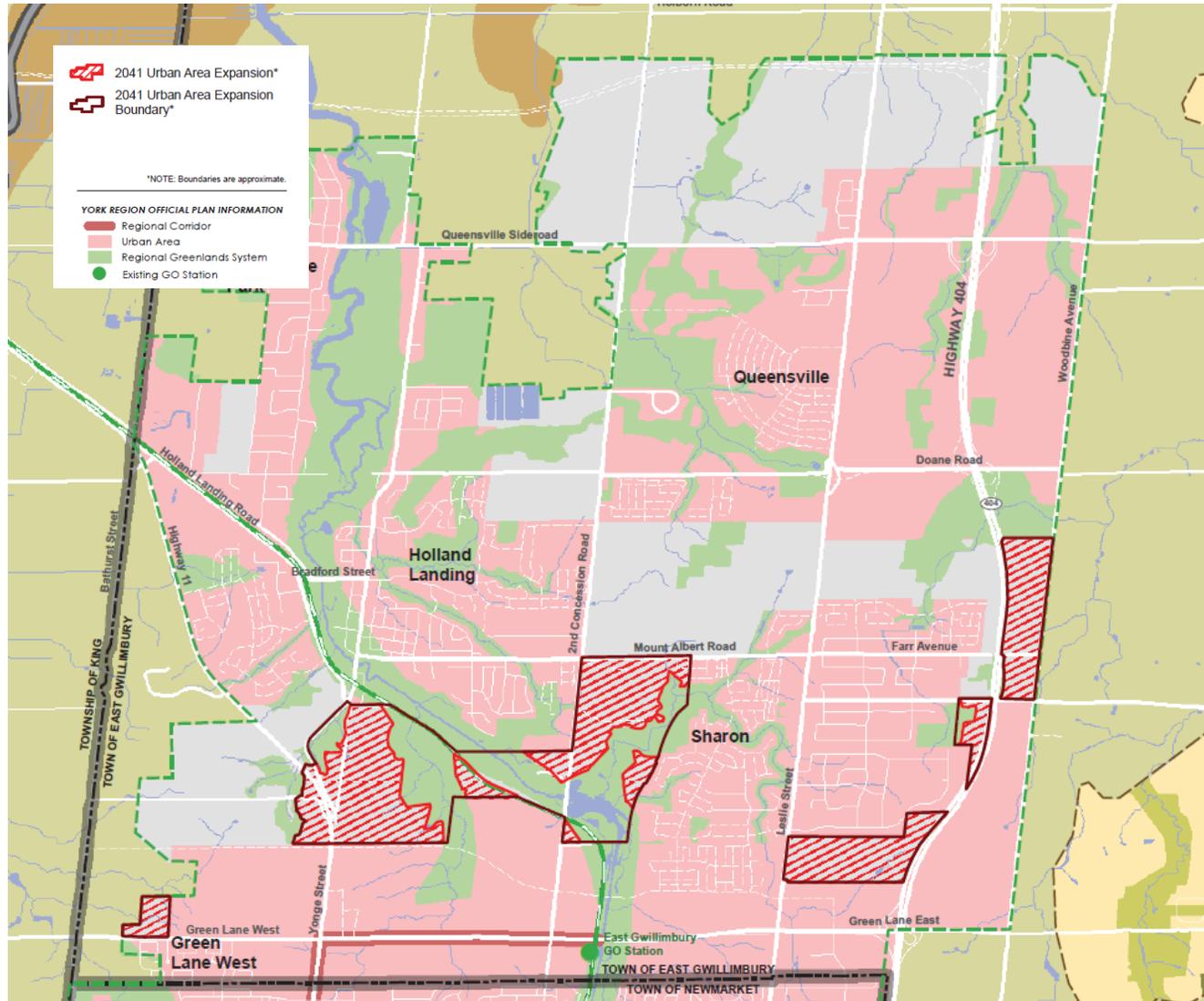
<sup>4</sup> Population-related jobs are addressed separately in our Employment Background Study

Figure 5: Location of BUA, DGA, and Whitebelt Lands in East Gwillimbury



Source: Town of East Gwillimbury

**Figure 6: Location of Whitebelt Lands Proposed for Urban Boundary Expansion**



Source: York Region

This would leave approximately 454 net hectares of whitebelt land (71%) that could be added to the DGA as part of a future urban boundary expansion for community growth beyond 2041.

#### 4.1 Population Allocation and Growth Timeline

Table 2 illustrates York Region’s population allocations to 2041 at the time of the previous MCR.

With the Region forecasted to grow to a population of 1,790,000 people in 2041, the Town of East Gwillimbury was allocated a total

of 104,700 people, representing an increase of 80,000 residents from 24,700 people in 2016<sup>5</sup>.

While Markham (29%), Vaughan (27%), and Richmond Hill (17%) will continue to account for the bulk of the regional population, the Town of East Gwillimbury’s place in the Region is expected to rise – from the smallest community on a population basis in 2016 to the fifth largest in 2041, just behind the Town of Newmarket (106,400 people).

**Table 2**

Population Forecasts by Municipality York Region, 2016 to 2041								
Municipality	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041	Change 2016-2041	
							Total	%
Aurora	57,200	65,100	70,600	76,400	81,800	86,100	28,900	51%
East Gwillimbury	24,700	37,500	50,100	63,600	81,900	104,700	80,000	324%
Georgina	46,800	50,100	54,700	59,700	66,600	73,200	26,400	56%
King	25,300	28,100	31,700	36,600	40,600	42,700	17,400	69%
Markham	339,100	365,100	405,000	445,800	486,200	518,300	179,200	53%
Newmarket	86,800	91,400	95,000	99,400	103,000	106,400	19,600	23%
Richmond Hill	201,000	223,200	242,300	263,700	281,900	295,600	94,600	47%
Vaughan	315,700	345,500	374,400	412,200	449,800	488,600	172,900	55%
Whitchurch Stouffville	47,300	51,100	56,300	62,900	68,900	74,500	27,200	58%
<b>York Region</b>	<b>1,143,900</b>	<b>1,257,100</b>	<b>1,380,100</b>	<b>1,520,200</b>	<b>1,660,700</b>	<b>1,790,000</b>	<b>646,100</b>	<b>56%</b>

Source: York Region

<sup>5</sup> This Regional estimate for East Gwillimbury includes the undercount and is therefore higher than the 2016 Census population

The Town is forecasted to accommodate 6% of the Region’s population in 2041 – up from 2% of the regional population in 2016. The completion of the Upper York Sewage Solution will allow East Gwillimbury to play a more significant role in accommodating growth in the coming decades.

The 80,000 new residents between 2016 and 2041 represents a 324% increase over 25 years – growth that is unmatched across the region with no other municipality forecasted to grow by more than 69% over this period (King).

The population growth is anticipated to largely occur in the latter stages of the growth horizon, with the period between 2031 and

2041 (+41,100 people) seeing more growth than the preceding 15-year period (+38,900 people). Servicing of land is a factor in this delayed growth.

## 4.2 Housing Projection

To accommodate the 80,000 new residents allocated to the Town of East Gwillimbury to 2041, the Region forecasts that 23,590 new residential units will be required between 2016 and 2041. Only Markham (60,600), Vaughan (59,500) and Richmond Hill (32,300) are forecast to receive more residential growth during this period (Table 3).

**Table 3**

<b>Forecasted Residential Unit Growth by Type</b>									
<b>York Region, 2016 to 2041</b>									
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Low-Density</b>			<b>Total (Low-Density)</b>	<b>Medium/High-Density</b>			<b>Total (Med/High)</b>	<b>Total (All Types)</b>
	<b>Single</b>	<b>Semi</b>	<b>Town</b>		<b>Stacked</b>	<b>Apartment</b>	<b>Duplex</b>		
Aurora	3,800	90	1,980	<b>5,870</b>	410	3,170	190	<b>3,770</b>	<b>9,640</b>
East Gwillimbury	12,150	1,470	6,530	<b>20,150</b>	1,030	1,780	630	<b>3,440</b>	<b>23,590</b>
Georgina	6,200	170	920	<b>7,290</b>	0	1,500	320	<b>1,820</b>	<b>9,110</b>
King	3,520	30	760	<b>4,310</b>	100	400	190	<b>690</b>	<b>5,000</b>
Markham	8,470	1,360	15,600	<b>25,430</b>	3,720	30,170	1,290	<b>35,180</b>	<b>60,610</b>
Newmarket	1,060	180	1,810	<b>3,050</b>	290	4,900	100	<b>5,290</b>	<b>8,340</b>
Richmond Hill	4,450	1,310	9,210	<b>14,970</b>	1,120	15,190	1,050	<b>17,360</b>	<b>32,330</b>
Vaughan	12,440	1,370	10,910	<b>24,720</b>	2,640	30,710	1,470	<b>34,820</b>	<b>59,540</b>
Whitchurch Stouffville	3,450	220	1,770	<b>5,440</b>	910	2,840	200	<b>3,950</b>	<b>9,390</b>
<b>York Region</b>	<b>55,540</b>	<b>6,200</b>	<b>49,490</b>	<b>111,230</b>	<b>10,220</b>	<b>90,660</b>	<b>5,440</b>	<b>106,320</b>	<b>328,780</b>

Source: York Region

Just over half of these units are anticipated to be single-detached homes (52%). Townhouses are expected to become a more prominent housing type, increasing from approximately 550 units in 2016 (7% of existing housing stock) to more than 7,000 units in 2041 (28% of new development, 22% of 2041 housing stock) – an increase of close to 1200% (Table 4).

**Table 4**

Residential Unit Growth Forecast By Type East Gwillimbury, 2016 to 2041						
Unit Type	2016	2021	2031	2041	Change	
					Total	%
Single-Detached	6,750	9,300	13,980	18,900	12,150	180%
Semi-Detached	200	420	870	1,670	1,470	735%
Townhouse	550	1,110	2,680	7,080	6,530	1187%
Stacked Townhouse	0	0	190	1,030	1,030	-
Apartment	280	280	650	2,060	1,780	636%
Duplex	320	420	680	950	630	197%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8,100</b>	<b>11,530</b>	<b>19,050</b>	<b>31,690</b>	<b>23,590</b>	<b>291%</b>

*Source: York Region*

This forecast indicates that the Region expects East Gwillimbury to remain a low-density residential community with 85% of new units expected to be single-detached, semi-detached or townhouses – one of the highest marks in the Region alongside King (86%) and Georgina (80%).

Higher-density development like apartments and stacked townhouses are forecasted to become more prominent in East Gwillimbury over time, albeit still only representing 15% of new residential growth to 2041. These built forms are also forecast to mostly be constructed after 2031, indicating that the market will eventually shift away from single-detached homes to a higher

proportion of medium and high-density housing types. The large majority of higher density development in the Region (82%) will occur in Vaughan, Markham, and Richmond Hill (Table 3).

### 4.3 Intensification Target

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe states that 50% of all new residential development in York Region be within the BUA. This is known as the “intensification target”.

As part of the growth allocation, the Region is responsible for determining intensification targets for each of its lower-tier municipalities for the Region to reach the target set out by the Growth Plan.

The residential intensification target that had been set for the Town of East Gwillimbury as part of the previous MCR was 4% (Table 5). This target was the lowest in the Region, with Georgina (24%) and King (26%) being the next lowest. The low intensification target points to the importance of the Town’s greenfield lands to accommodate future residential development. The market and land supply characteristics for East Gwillimbury’s BUA supports this low target.

**Table 5**

<b>Residential Intensification Targets York Region BUA, 2016 to 2041</b>		
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Share of total 2016-2041 growth</b>
Aurora	3,700	38%
East Gwillimbury	900	4%
Georgina	2,200	24%
King	1,300	26%
Markham	36,000	59%
Newmarket	7,000	84%
Richmond Hill	22,500	70%
Vaughan	33,900	57%
Whitchurch Stouffville	3,100	33%
<b>York Region</b>	<b>110,600</b>	<b>51%</b>

*Source: York Region*

#### 4.4 Distribution of Residential Units

Most new development and population growth in East Gwillimbury will occur on greenfield lands by virtue of the low intensification target for the municipality.

At 4% intensification, the BUA is expected to accommodate approximately 900 of the 23,590 new residential units forecast for East Gwillimbury.

The new residential growth in the BUA is expected to be primarily in the form of apartments (65%) and townhouses (27%), two built forms that generally lend themselves to the type of infill

development that is associated with intensification. The BUA is expected to accommodate 31% of the new apartment units in East Gwillimbury (Table 6).

The 1,400 net hectares of DGA lands will absorb 81% of the new residential development in the Town from 2016, approximately 19,110 units (Table 6). In contrast to the BUA, the DGA lands will primarily accommodate ground-related units with single-detached, semi-detached, and townhouses representing 86% of new units in these areas.

The 181 net hectares of Whitebelt lands that would be added to the DGA after 2036 would accommodate an additional 3,610 residential units – or 15% of the Town’s total growth to 2041 (Table 6). The bulk of these units are proposed to be in single-detached (57%) and townhouse forms (35%). The Whitebelt lands proposed for urban expansion fill gaps from a south to north progression to avoid leap-frog development.

#### 4.5 Population Density and Distribution

Along with the 4% intensification rate for the BUA, York Region provided two specific population density targets for the Town of East Gwillimbury in their MCR:

- 56 people per net hectare in the DGA; and,
- 66 people per net hectare on Whitebelt lands.

Given the later timeline for Whitebelt development (2036-2041), the density target for the Whitebelt lands is higher than the

existing DGA as densities are expected to increase over time. This is a reasonable assumption due to a combination of factors including shrinking lot sizes.

It is important to note that the densities identified above do not include population-related jobs – forecast to be in the range of 8 jobs per net hectare. This is assessed by Urban Metrics under separate cover. Of note, the minimum target established by the Growth Plan for DGA and Whitebelt lands is 50 people and jobs per net hectare, which would require 42 people per hectare with the jobs netted out.

Based on a total population of 104,700 people in 2041, the Region’s MCR noted the following population totals in East Gwillimbury:

- BUA: 14,370 persons<sup>6</sup>;
- DGA: 78,440 persons<sup>7</sup>; and,
- Whitebelt: 11,890 persons.

The following sections consider East Gwillimbury’s market context and current residential development applications to reconcile whether the Region’s MCR assumptions, related to population densities in particular, are reasonable

**Table 6**

<b>Forecasted Distribution of New Residential Units Town of East Gwillimbury, 2016 to 2041</b>										
Housing Type	New Units (2016-2041)	Built-Up Area			Designated Greenfield Area			Whitebelt Area		
		Total Units	%	% EG New Units*	Total Units	%	% EG New Units*	Total Units	%	% EG New Units*
Single-Detached	12,150	20	2%	0%	10,040	53%	83%	2,070	57%	17%
Semi-Detached	1,470	0	0%	0%	1,300	7%	88%	170	5%	12%
Townhouse	6,530	230	27%	4%	5,010	26%	77%	1,280	35%	20%
Stacked Townhouse	1,030	0	0%	0%	1,030	5%	100%	0	0%	0%
Apartment	1,780	560	65%	31%	1,120	6%	63%	100	3%	6%
Duplex	630	50	6%	8%	540	3%	86%	0	0%	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>23,590</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>19,040</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15%</b>

*\*Refers to the % of units relative to total new units forecast for the 2016-2041 growth period of that housing type in the Town of East Gwillimbury  
Note: Figures may not add due to rounding. An additional 20 units are forecasted to be constructed in rural areas outside the BUA, DGA, and whitebelt land boundaries.  
Source: York Region*

<sup>6</sup> The MCR did not note this total specifically. However, this total has been calculated by subtracting the stated DGA and whitebelt populations from the total population forecast.

<sup>7</sup> This DGA figure includes population and residential units that were constructed between 2011 and 2016.

## 5.0 Residential Market Context

The following section provides an overview of the market for new residential units in York Region and East Gwillimbury<sup>8</sup>.

### 5.1 High-Rise Sales Increasing in York Region

Since 2004, York Region has consistently accounted for 20% to 25% of all new home sales in the GTA<sup>9</sup>. Despite this consistency, the types of units being sold has been shifting in recent years.

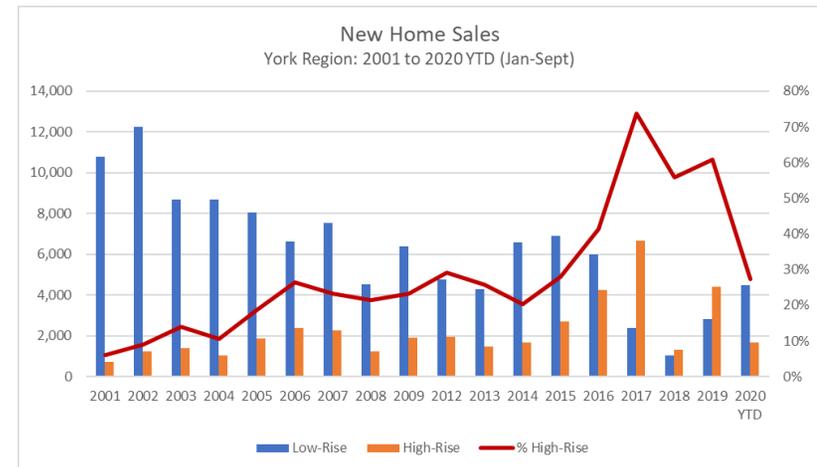
Between 2006 and 2015, high-rise<sup>10</sup> units accounted for about 20% to 30% of all new unit sales in the Region. However, since 2016, this figure has been on the rise with four straight years above 40%, reaching a peak of 74% in 2017 (Figure 7).

This shift in new residential development has been spurred by low supply of low-rise<sup>11</sup> homes due to fewer project launches, combined with rapidly increasing prices for low-rise homes, changing demographics and lifestyle priorities, and planning policy.

Markham and Vaughan, and to a lesser extent Richmond Hill, have been the primary drivers of new residential development in the Region over the past decade and have been the focus of this new high-rise development, particularly in denser nodes like Vaughan Metropolitan Centre and Downtown Markham. However, smaller

communities like Whitchurch-Stouffville, Aurora, and Newmarket have also started to attract new high-rise development in recent years, albeit in lower numbers and at smaller scales.

**Figure 7**



Source: RealNet/Altus Group

### 5.2 East Gwillimbury's Place in the Regional Market is Growing

As prices for low-rise homes grow, buyers who desire these housing types tend to look further afield when making purchasing decisions. With pricing increasing rapidly in higher value

<sup>8</sup> Full-year sales data was unavailable for new home sales in 2010 and 2011

<sup>9</sup> The lone exception was 2018 (9%)

<sup>10</sup> Apartments and stacked townhouses

<sup>11</sup> Single-detached, semi-detached, and traditional townhouses

communities like Vaughan, Markham, Aurora, and Newmarket, other municipalities like East Gwillimbury or Georgina begin to attract buyers who may not have previously considered them as a location for new housing.

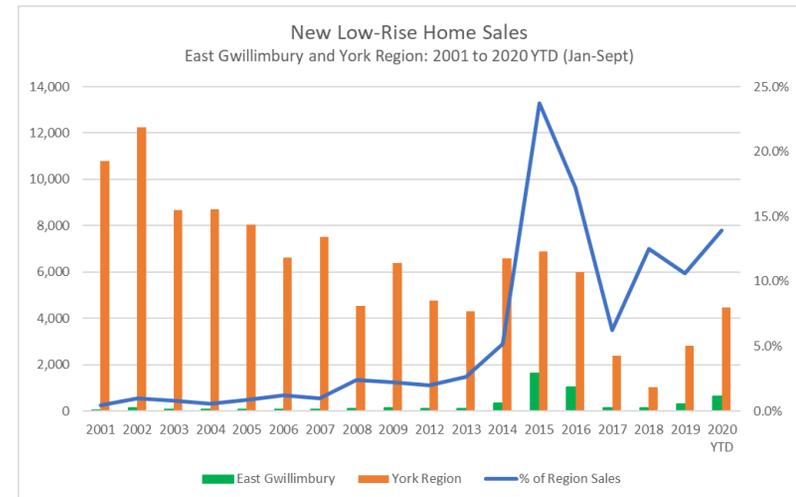
These buyers are “driving to qualify” as they seek out their desired housing type at an attainable price point. This is not a trend that is specific to York Region – in Durham as prices increase in Whitby and Pickering, buyers may look to Oshawa or Clarington, in Halton as prices have increased in Oakville, buyers look to Milton or Burlington or even beyond regional borders towards Grimsby and Stoney Creek.

As demand has risen, East Gwillimbury’s place within the regional housing market is growing. As noted in Figure 8, after accounting for 2.5% or less of new low-rise home sales in York Region from 2001 to 2013, East Gwillimbury has seen its share of new housing sales increase significantly. Since 2014, East Gwillimbury has accounted for at least 4% of regional sales in six of seven years, surpassing 10% in 2015, 2016 and through the first nine months of 2020. The increased demand is being driven by a combination of factors including increased pricing in municipalities to the south and declining low-density supply elsewhere in York Region

Since 2014, East Gwillimbury has averaged more than 600 new low-rise sales per year – including two years above 1,000 sales (2015, 2016) – after averaging just 75 sales per year between 2001 and 2013. When considering new low-rise sales only, East Gwillimbury has increased from a 1% to 3% share of regional sales

prior to 2014 to close to 15% annually on average since then (Figure 8).

**Figure 8**



Source: RealNet/Altus Group

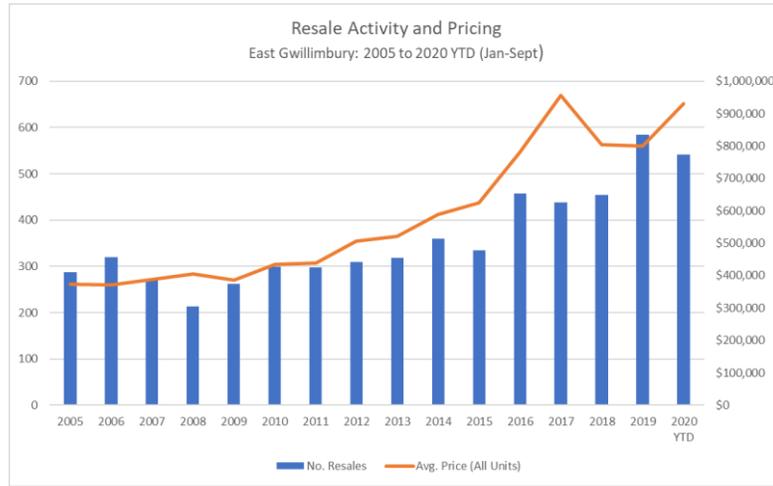
### 5.3 Increased Activity Reflected in Resale Market

In addition to the heightened activity in the new home market in East Gwillimbury, the number of units being sold on the resale market has also been growing steadily in recent years, pointing to increased interest in East Gwillimbury as a residential destination (Figure 9).

Since 2016, the Town has seen more than 400 resales annually, with 2020 on pace to surpass 2019’s record of 584 transactions despite COVID-19 having slowed the market in the spring.

The majority of this resale activity is for single-detached homes, accounting for more than three-quarters of all transactions.

**Figure 9**



Source: Toronto Real Estate Board

## 5.4 Single-Detached Housing Dominates Local Market Activity

As noted, the Town of East Gwillimbury has a high proportion of single-detached units (83% as of 2016). This is further reflected in local housing market activity.

As of September 2020, single-detached units accounted for 84% of units in actively marketing developments in East Gwillimbury (Table 7). Their popularity as a housing type was reflected in both the high percentage of sold units (96%) and the higher absorption

rates relative to semi-detached and townhouse product despite pricing now exceeding \$1,000,000 on average.

**Table 7**

Actively Marketing Residential Units in East Gwillimbury As of September 2020									
Product Type	No. of Offerings	Total Units	%	Total Sales	% Sold	Price Range*			Absorption Rate <sup>^</sup>
						Min.	Max.	Avg.	
Single-Detached	23	1,692	84%	1,631	96%	\$865,990	\$1,500,000	\$1,016,000	2.9
36' to 38'	9	680	40%	656	96%	\$865,990	\$1,058,990	\$941,000	3.2
40' to 42'	8	497	29%	481	97%	\$899,990	\$1,500,000	\$1,040,000	2.5
45'	6	515	30%	494	96%	\$944,990	\$1,229,990	\$1,055,000	3.0
Semi-Detached	4	124	6%	112	90%	\$679,900	\$728,900	\$705,000	1.2
Townhouse	6	193	10%	156	81%	\$590,990	\$764,990	\$674,000	1.8

\*Pricing is for available units only. ^Absorption rate is per product offering per month.  
Source: RealNet/Altus Group

As the availability of greenfield land has declined and the cost and supply of land in communities like Vaughan and Markham has become more prohibitive, low-rise residential growth has pushed northward into East Gwillimbury where land is less expensive and is more readily available.

It is notable that all single-detached lots on the market have frontages between 36' and 45' (Table 7). A 36' lot is near the low-end of the range for single-detached lot sizes, but there are examples elsewhere as low as 25' to 30', including in York Region municipalities like Vaughan, Markham, Newmarket, and Whitchurch-Stouffville. A limited number of sold out offerings in East Gwillimbury have also included these smaller lot sizes. These smaller lots elsewhere indicate that there is room for more compact development in East Gwillimbury that could increase single-detached densities beyond current development trends.

## 5.5 Pricing is Growing Rapidly

As noted, pricing for new single-detached units in East Gwillimbury has now surpassed \$1,000,000 on average, with new semi-detached and townhouse units approaching or surpassing \$700,000 (Table 7).

In the resale market, pricing has also been growing quickly. The average resale home in East Gwillimbury sold for just over \$930,000 through the first 10 months of 2020 (Figure 8), with resale single-detached homes averaging just over \$1,000,000 on the year, in line with new homes.

Resale pricing is up approximately 50% since 2015 for single-detached homes (+41% in the GTA) but has risen even faster for resale semi-detached and townhouse units in East Gwillimbury – up 59% and 76%, respectively, since 2015. At the same time, incomes are not rising at the same pace. Between 2011 and 2016, incomes increased by 17%.

As prices continue to increase – particularly for single-detached homes – it could shape what type of housing is being built in the Town moving forward. Single-detached lot sizes should become more compact and demand should grow for townhouse units as a more affordable alternative to single-detached homes. Increased prices could also drive some demand for higher densities like stacked townhouses or even apartments in the longer-term.

## 5.6 Local High-Rise Market Has Yet to Form

While new and resale low-rise sales have been on the rise in recent years, the high-rise market that is growing elsewhere in the Region has yet to form in East Gwillimbury. The lack of an established urban core with concentrated amenities and transit undermines demand for high-density uses.

This is further reflected in the resale market as apartment sales are rare due to the lack of apartment supply in the Town (280 units as of the 2016 Census). Over the past 22 months (Jan 2019 to Oct 2020), there have only been two apartment units sold on the resale market in East Gwillimbury.

## 5.7 Growth Forecast Envisions More Townhouses

As noted in Section 4.2, the Region expects that single-detached units will remain the predominant housing type in East Gwillimbury moving forward, accounting for 52% of new units between 2016 and 2041. Overall, East Gwillimbury will remain a predominantly low-rise community with 85% of the residential growth forecasted for the Town expected to be single-detached, semi-detached, or townhouse built forms.

However, the forecasts also signal a shift in the market towards a higher proportion of townhouses than are currently being built today. The Region's forecast for East Gwillimbury envisions that 28% of all units constructed between 2016 and 2041 will be townhouses. By comparison, recent data on housing completions

indicates that just 17% of new units constructed in East Gwillimbury between 2010 and 2019 have been townhouses.

This is a similar market evolution that has been observed in many other GTA communities as they have grown, as availability of greenfield land has declined, and as single-detached pricing has increased.

## 5.8 Summary of Findings

The key findings from this analysis show:

- The lack of an established urban core, concentrated amenities, and competition from more urbanized communities will undermine significant high-density residential market demand in East Gwillimbury for the foreseeable future.
- Pricing has been growing rapidly for all housing types in East Gwillimbury – both for new and resale units. As prices continue to climb, it is likely that demand will shift from single-detached homes to an increased number of townhouses, and eventually stacked townhouses and apartments.
- While municipalities to the south focus on intensification, East Gwillimbury will play an increasingly important role in York Region by servicing demand for family-sized, low-rise residential units. East Gwillimbury is therefore likely to enhance the attractiveness of York Region by offering a strong supply of low-rise housing options, providing choice to current and future residents as they evaluate housing options across the broader GTHA.

## 6.0 East Gwillimbury Proposed Supply

There are 31 active residential development applications in the Town of East Gwillimbury. These applications cover approximately 748 net hectares of land and account for more than 9,200 units. The units proposed/approved as part of these applications represent approximately 39% of the forecasted new residential units required between 2016 and 2041 for East Gwillimbury.

Twenty-eight of the 31 applications and 99% of proposed units are on properties in the DGA. Just 124 units are currently proposed in the BUA, 85% of which are townhouses (106 units). The minimal number of units proposed in the BUA relative to the DGA follows the Region’s expectation that intensification in the BUA will be minimal.

These 28 DGA applications represent approximately 743 net hectares of land – representing more than 50% of the community land in the DGA as identified in York Region’s previous MCR (1,400 net hectares) (Table 8). The proposed units also represent just under 50% of the total forecast units for the DGA between 2016 and 2041.

**Table 8**

Proposed Units by Development Area East Gwillimbury, October 2020					
Growth Area	Total Land Area (net ha)	Land Area Under Application	% Land Area Under Application	Proposed Units	% Forecasted Unit Growth (16-41)
Built-Up Area	n/a	4.9	n/a	124	14%
Designated Greenfield Area	1,400	743.1	53%	9,104	48%

*Source: Town of East Gwillimbury, York Region*

Summary information on the individual development applications can be found in Table 11 on page 27.

Like the future housing forecast for East Gwillimbury, the applications include a high proportion of ground-related units – led by single-detached units at 58% and townhouses at 27%.

Higher density forms of housing are not yet present in significant numbers in these applications – which follows the forecast that they will primarily come to market after 2031. Just 5% of all proposed units are apartments, and no stacked townhouse units are currently proposed.

Further, it is notable that amongst these proposed apartments, the majority (62%) are expected to be marketed towards seniors. Combined with the 411 proposed retirement units, seniors housing accounts for nearly 80% of the higher density housing forms currently proposed in East Gwillimbury.

Whereas younger buyers may consider apartments in other GTA communities, the proposed mix clearly expects that this demographic is moving to East Gwillimbury for ground-oriented housing opportunities. Instead of being an option for first-time buyers, the proposed apartments in East Gwillimbury will attract local downsizers or people choosing the community to be close to children/grandchildren moving to the new low-density homes or for lifestyle reasons.

We can estimate the population in these proposed units by applying a persons per unit ('PPU') to each housing type. York Region has provided an estimated PPU for new units in East Gwillimbury as follows:

- Single-Detached: 3.76 PPU;
- Semi-Detached: 3.17 PPU;
- Townhouses: 2.88 PPU;
- Stacked townhouses: 2.68 PPU;
- Apartments: 2.42 PPU; and,
- Duplex: 3.20 PPU.

In addition, NBLC has provided an estimate of 1.1 PPU for retirement units<sup>12</sup> and a lower PPU of 1.5 to apartments that have been identified as “seniors-oriented”<sup>13</sup>.

Overall, as noted in Table 9, the estimated population in these 31 applications is 30,219 people – 38% of the 80,000 new residents forecast for the Town between 2016 and 2041.

**Table 9**

<b>Proposed Units and Estimated Population Town of East Gwillimbury, October 2020</b>				
<b>Unit Type</b>	<b>No. Units</b>	<b>% Units</b>	<b>PPU</b>	<b>Population</b>
Single-Detached	5,381	58%	3.76	20,233
Semi-Detached	474	5%	3.17	1,503
Townhouse	2,478	27%	2.88	7,137
Apartment	184	2%	2.42	445
Seniors Apartment	300	3%	1.50	450
Retirement	411	4%	1.10	452
Stacked Townhouse	0	0%	2.68	0
Duplex	0	0%	3.20	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>9,228</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>30,219</b>

*Source: Town of East Gwillimbury, York Region*

## 6.1 Estimated Population Density

Utilizing the estimated population, we were able to estimate the population density of these development applications. As noted in Table 11, on page 27, the overall population density of the active development applications is estimated at 40 persons per net hectare.

This estimated population density is below the Region’s density target of 56 persons per net hectare in the DGA. Only 5 of 28 DGA applications have densities that exceed 56 persons per net hectare – three of which have apartment/retirement components as a

<sup>12</sup> Based on data from CMHC’s 2019 Seniors Housing Report for York Region.

<sup>13</sup> CMHC (2012): Housing for Older Canadians: The Definitive Guide to the Over-55 Market

future phase and two others which feature a large number of townhouses.

Notwithstanding this, it is likely that densities will increase over time as the market evolves and shifts towards an increasing proportion of townhouses and, eventually, apartments and stacked townhouses, along with shrinking lot sizes.

The density potential of townhouses is reflected in the limited number of BUA applications where 85% of proposed units are townhouses. These three applications have an average estimated density of 73 persons per net hectare.

With the active development applications representing more than 50% of the available DGA land in East Gwillimbury (743 net hectares), the remaining DGA lands (657 net hectares) would need to have an average density of approximately 74 persons per net hectare for the overall DGA to reach an average of 56 persons per net hectare. Given similar densities in the BUA applications and the assumption that future developments will include a lower proportion of single-detached homes (Table 10), this target may be within reach. This will be explored further in Section 7 and 8.

## 6.2 Summary of Findings

- In total, there were 31 residential development applications in East Gwillimbury at the time of writing. The majority of applications and proposed units are located in the DGA, encompassing more than 50% of the DGA community lands.

- 85% of proposed units are either single-detached or townhouses – similar to the Region’s forecast for the Town. The applications are estimated to include more than 30,000 residents when built-out.
- Overall population densities are 40 persons per net hectare across the 31 applications – well below the target of 56 persons per hectare for the DGA set by the Region.
- Based on the estimated population density in the 31 development applications, an average population density of 74 persons per net hectare would be required for the 657 net hectares of remaining DGA lands in order to hit the Region’s target population density of 56 persons per net hectare.

**Table 10**

Forecasted and Proposed Units in the Designated Greenfield Area East Gwillimbury, 2016 to 2041						
Unit Type	Forecasted Units	%	Proposed Units <sup>^</sup>	%	Remaining Units	%
Single-Detached	10,040	53%	5,375	59%	4,665	47%
Semi-Detached	1,300	7%	472	5%	828	8%
Townhouse	5,010	26%	2,372	26%	2,638	27%
Apartment*	1,030	5%	885	10%	145	1%
Stacked Townhouse	1,120	6%	0	0%	1,120	11%
Duplex	540	3%	0	0%	540	5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>19,040</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,104</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,936</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Retirement units have been counted as apartments; <sup>^</sup>Based on active development applications  
Source: Town of East Gwillimbury, York Region

**Table 11**

Residential Development Applications and Associated Estimated Densities in East Gwillimbury As of October 2020													
Location / Application Number	Community <sup>^</sup>	Area <sup>^^</sup>	Status	Hectares	No. of Units						Estimated Population	Density	
					Single-Detached	Semi-Detached	Townhouse	Apartment	Retirement	Total		Units/ha	Persons/ha
464 Mount Albert	HL	BUA	Under Review	2.0	6	-	15	-	-	21	66	10	33
19T-09001 (Kerbel North)	HL	DGA	Approved	12.1	79	-	-	-	-	79	297	7	24
19T-90015 (Kerbel Mid)	HL	DGA	Approved	31.4	275	-	33	-	-	308	1,129	10	36
19T-89112 (Kerbel South)	HL	DGA	Approved	19.3	160	-	51	-	-	211	748	11	39
19T-94036 (Lorac)	HL	DGA	Approved	20.6	180	4	117	-	-	301	1,026	15	50
19T-88085 (Manington)	HL	DGA	Approved	33.6	221	24	145	-	-	390	1,325	12	39
19T-95088 (Winged Foot)	HL	DGA	Approved	59.6	378	152	123	-	-	653	2,257	11	38
19T-90019 (Valley Brook)	HL	DGA	Approved	53.1	420	124	145	-	-	689	2,390	13	45
19t-20001 (Tricap)	HL	DGA	Approved	11.1	64	-	136	90	-	290	850	26	77
19267 Centre Street	Mt. A	BUA	Under Review	2.0	-	2	62	10	-	74	209	37	103
19T-17002/CDM.16.01 (Dreamland)	Mt. A	BUA	Closed	0.9	-	-	29	-	-	29	84	33	97
19T-13001 (Oxford)	Mt. A	DGA	Approved	39.2	141	70	24	-	-	235	821	6	21
19T-17003 (Rice)	Mt. A	DGA	Under Review	15.0	15	-	16	-	-	31	102	2	7
19T-03001 (Queensville Phase 1-3)	Queen	DGA	Approved	99.6	785	-	239	-	-	1,024	3,640	10	37
19T-14003 (Queensville Phase 4)	Queen	DGA	Approved	22.3	141	-	72	-	-	213	738	10	33
19T-17001 (Queensville Phase 5)	Queen	DGA	LPAT Settlement	25.8	273	-	81	-	-	354	1,260	14	49
19T-18002 (Queensville Phase 6)	Queen	DGA	Conditional Approval	10.1	45	-	-	-	-	45	169	4	17
19T-09002 (Minto)	Queen	DGA	Closed	36.8	381	-	280	-	-	661	2,239	18	61
19T-09003 (Valmadera)	Queen	DGA	Under Review	8.2	142	-	-	-	-	142	534	17	65
19T-18001 (southwest Queensville)	Queen	DGA	Under Review	10.9	71	-	21	-	-	92	327	8	30
19T-08005 (Wycliffe)*	Sharon	DGA	Approved	17.0	88	46	44	200	-	378	903	22	53
19T-17004 (Wycliffe)*	Sharon	DGA	Approved	2.8	-	-	66	100	206	372	567	131	200
19086 Leslie	Sharon	DGA	On Hold	4.1	-	-	-	84	205	289	429	71	105
19T-11001 (Ashley)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	8.6	7	-	141	-	-	148	432	17	50
19T-08003 (West Sharon)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	13.2	223	-	132	-	-	355	1,219	27	92
19T-08001 (Elderbank)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	26.0	177	52	62	-	-	291	1,009	11	39
19T-07002 (Sundial)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	40.0	396	-	-	-	-	396	1,489	10	37
19T-08002 (Yorkwood Phase 1)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	20.6	193	-	-	-	-	193	726	9	35
19T-08004 (Sharonvit)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	28.3	232	-	54	-	-	286	1,028	10	36
19T-14001 (Acorn)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	26.4	150	-	145	-	-	295	982	11	37
19T-14002 (South Sharon)	Sharon	DGA	Approved	47.3	138	-	245	-	-	383	1,224	8	26
<b>Total (31 Applications):</b>				<b>748.0</b>	<b>5,381</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>2,478</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>9,228</b>	<b>30,219</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Designated Greenfield Area (28 Applications):</b>				<b>743.1</b>	<b>5,375</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>2,372</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>9,104</b>	<b>29,860</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Built-Up Area (3 Applications):</b>				<b>4.9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>73</b>

<sup>^</sup>Community: HL = Holland Landing, Mt. A = Mount Albert, Queen = Queensville <sup>^^</sup>Area: BUA = Built-Up Area, DGA = Designated Greenfield Area \*Apartment units are geared towards seniors. PPU has been adjusted to 1.5.  
 Note: Some residential units in these applications have already been constructed or are already being actively marketed  
 Source: Town of East Gwillimbury; Watson and Associates Development Charges Background Study (2019)

## 7.0 Reconciling Market Realities and Regional Density Targets

We have established – both from a market perspective and from the work in the previous Regional MCR – that East Gwillimbury is likely to remain primarily a low-density residential market for the foreseeable future. However, over time, the market should eventually shift to a higher proportion of townhouses, along with some new apartment and stacked townhouse development.

We have also noted in Section 6.1 that current development applications yield density estimates well below those established by the Region for the Town’s future growth and that future development beyond current proposals will have to have significantly higher population densities than these applications.

The question becomes – are the Region’s density targets for East Gwillimbury’s population reasonable? Or should they be lower given the trends in the current development applications?

York Region released a report in June 2020 called *Planning for Density in New Communities*. As part of the report, 12 study areas across the Region were analyzed to determine if Provincial and Regional density targets are being met in new communities. The Region has previously set a density target of 70 persons and jobs per net hectare in new communities – higher than the Growth Plan’s minimum target of 50 persons and jobs per net hectare. The 12 study areas are in varied locations with varying unit mixes.

The results of this work by York Region can be utilized for the purpose of this report to analyze whether the density targets for

East Gwillimbury are reasonable by considering what is already happening throughout the Region today.

Table 12 on page 29 summarizes the findings on the 12 study areas and Figure 10 on page 30 illustrates their locations.

Not all of these study areas are comparable to East Gwillimbury. Several are in much larger and denser communities (Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill), while others have unit mixes that are significantly different from what is forecast for East Gwillimbury (South Keswick, King City Southeast).

However, those located in similar sized communities – in terms of population in 2041 – and/or those with a similar unit mix to what is forecast in East Gwillimbury can help inform our analysis.

Ten of 12 study areas include population densities of at least 50 persons per net hectare. These areas have been planned and building out since as far back as the late-1990’s, in many cases before the Growth Plan and Region’s density targets were in place. Despite this, the market has delivered densities above the Growth Plan targets, and in many cases close to or above the Region’s higher density targets, demonstrating that communities with a high proportion of ground-related units can still meet these densities.

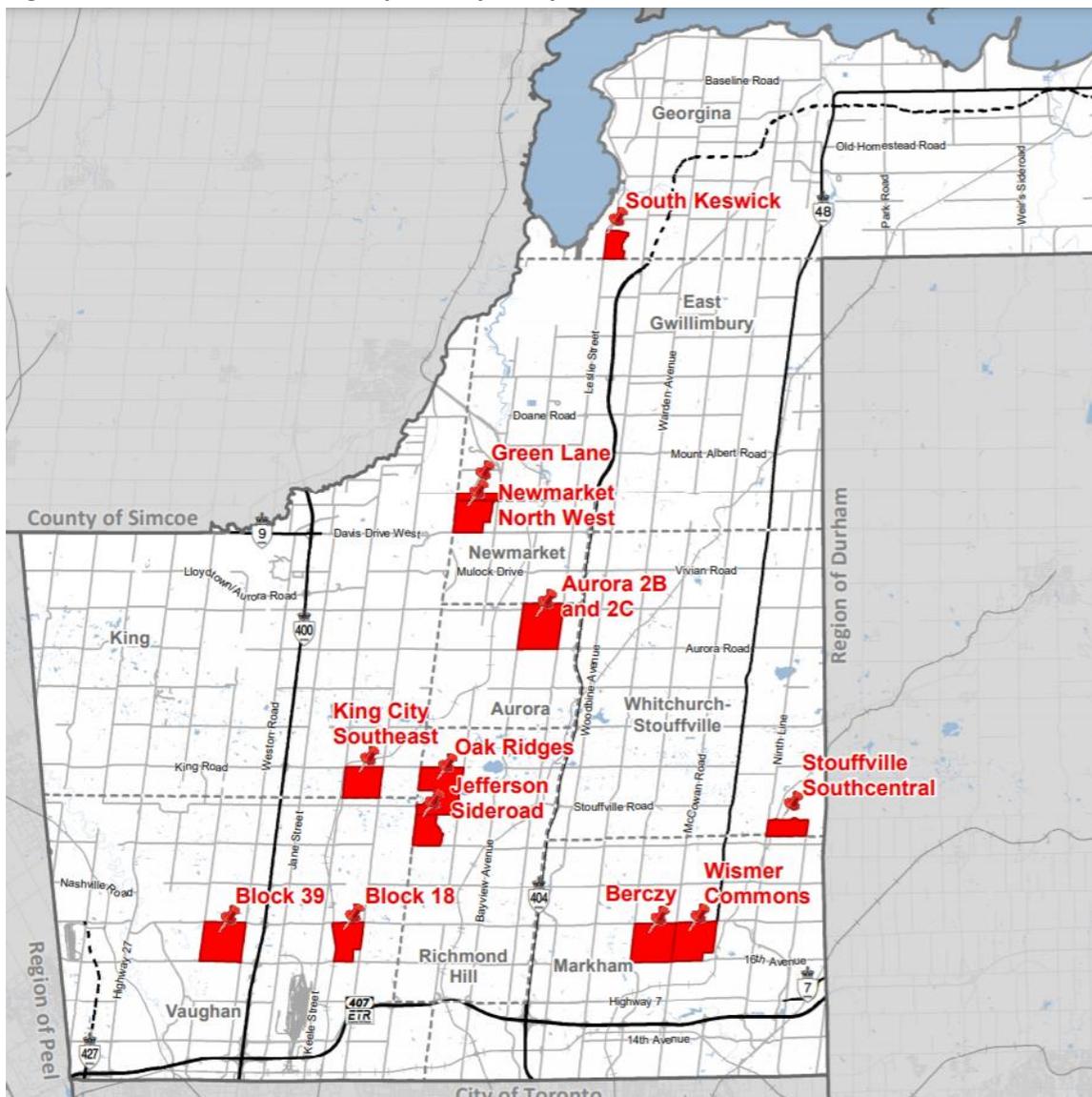
We have highlighted the study areas that we believe are most relevant to East Gwillimbury in Table 12 and profile them below.

**Table 12**

<b>York Region Community Density Analysis</b>											
Study Area	Municipality	Land Area (ha)		Housing Mix at Build-Out				No. Residents		Pop. Density (persons/ha)	
		Built (2016)	Total	Single	Semi	Townhouses	Apartments	2016	Build-Out	2016	Build-Out
Aurora 2B / 2C	Aurora	217	362	52%	6%	26%	16%	10,870	19,310	50	53
Green Lane	East Gwillimbury	62	68	47%	21%	32%	0%	2,190	2,190	35	32
South Keswick	Georgina	76	134	79%	8%	13%	0%	3,810	6,780	50	51
King City Southeast	King	167	205	95%	0%	4%	1%	2,620	3,260	16	16
Berczy	Markham	387	399	58%	12%	26%	4%	23,300	24,780	60	62
Wismer Commons	Markham	348	376	47%	16%	21%	16%	21,140	25,740	61	68
Newmarket Northwest	Newmarket	149	189	56%	13%	30%	1%	9,550	12,230	64	65
Jefferson Sideroad	Richmond Hill	175	180	78%	0%	22%	0%	8,840	8,910	51	50
Oak Ridges	Richmond Hill	255	267	61%	5%	27%	7%	13,850	15,470	54	58
Block 18	Vaughan	192	213	68%	17%	15%	0%	11,470	12,370	60	58
Block 39	Vaughan	363	370	62%	16%	16%	6%	21,200	22,780	58	62
Stouffville Southcentral	Whitchurch-Stouffville	111	134	63%	21%	16%	0%	7,670	8,740	69	65

*Source: York Region Planning for Density in New Communities*

**Figure 10: Location of Community Density Study Areas**

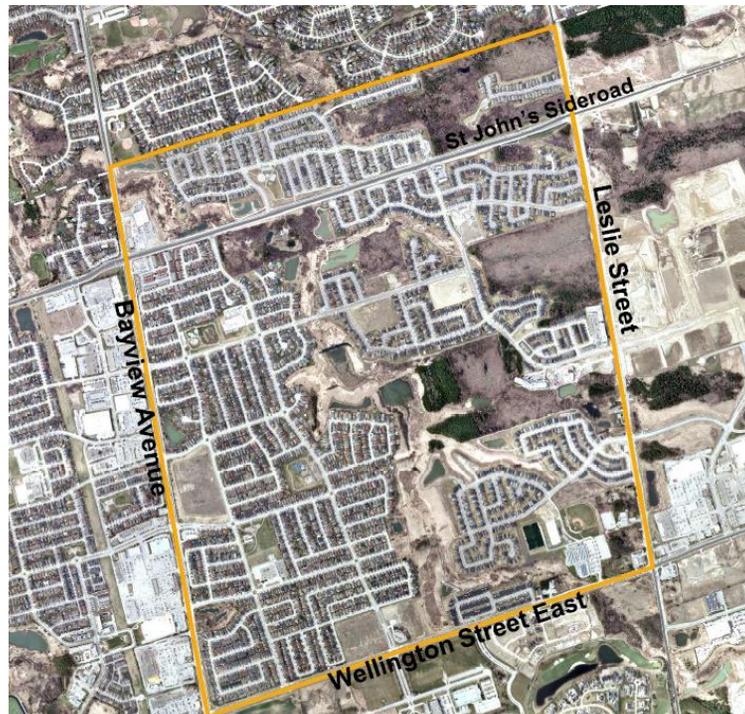


Source: York Region Planning for Density in New Communities

## 7.1 Aurora 2B/2C

Aurora 2B/2C is a 362-hectare area at the north end of the Town of Aurora (Figure 11). Though Aurora has more than double the population in 2016, East Gwillimbury is forecast to grow to a larger population in 2041 (104,700 vs 86,100). Like East Gwillimbury, the Town of Aurora is a predominantly low-density community located north of the major population centres in York Region.

**Figure 11: Aurora 2B/2C**



Source: York Region

The Aurora 2B/2C area is planned to accommodate an almost identical mix of units to East Gwillimbury's forecasted residential growth. Table 13 compares the two.

**Table 13**

Forecasted Housing Mix at Full Build-Out		
Housing Type	Aurora 2B/2C	East Gwillimbury
Single-Detached	52%	52%
Semi-Detached	6%	6%
Townhouse <sup>^</sup>	26%	32%
Apartment <sup>*</sup>	16%	11%

<sup>^</sup>The townhouse category includes both traditional and stacked townhouse units. <sup>\*</sup>The apartment category includes both apartments and duplexes.  
Source: York Region Planning for Density in New Communities

Aurora 2B/2C is currently 60% built out with a population density of **50 persons per net hectare**. At full build out, based on the planned unit mix, the area is expected to reach a population density of **53 persons per net hectare**.

## 7.2 Green Lane, East Gwillimbury

The Green Lane area is located at the south end of the Town of East Gwillimbury. Its location in East Gwillimbury makes it an obvious point of comparison for possible density targets.

Outside of King City Southeast – which features large lot sizes and a high proportion of single-detached homes (95%) – Green Lane features the lowest population density at just **35 persons per net hectare** with 91% of the area already built out and no additional residential development expected. The population density is

anticipated to drop to **32 persons per net hectare upon full build-out** as the remaining six hectares of land are built out with non-residential uses.

**Figure 12: Green Lane, East Gwillimbury**



Source: York Region

However, the reason for the low population density is that this area has a larger focus on jobs than any of the other study areas – giving it the highest job density amongst the 12 study areas at 20 jobs per net hectare as of 2016 and a projection of 18 jobs per net hectare at full build-out (Table 14).

No other study area registered a current or future jobs density above 7 jobs per net hectare. When the population and job densities are added together, Green Lane has an overall density of 50 to 55 persons and jobs per net hectare, which is more in line with some of the other study areas.

It is also notable that the Green Lane area is planned to accommodate a higher proportion of semi-detached homes

(+15%) and a lower amount of apartments (-11%) than new growth in the wider Town of East Gwillimbury. As such, population densities would be expected to be lower in Green Lane given the lower proportion of higher density unit types.

Given the above, we do not believe that the low population density is a signal that the Region’s DGA density target for East Gwillimbury is unreasonable.

**Table 14**

York Region Community Density Analysis					
Study Area	Municipality	Pop. Density (persons/ha)		Jobs Density (per ha)	
		2016	Build-Out	2016	Build-Out
Aurora 2B / 2C	Aurora	50	53	4	5
Green Lane	East Gwillimbury	35	32	20	18
South Keswick	Georgina	50	51	3	3
King City Southeast	King	16	16	4	3
Berczy	Markham	60	62	5	5
Wismer Commons	Markham	61	68	6	7
Newmarket Northwest	Newmarket	64	65	4	4
Jefferson Sideroad	Richmond Hill	51	50	4	4
Oak Ridges	Richmond Hill	54	58	5	7
Block 18	Vaughan	60	58	5	6
Block 39	Vaughan	58	62	6	7
Stouffville Southcentral	Whitchurch-Stouffville	69	65	4	4

Source: York Region Planning for Density in New Communities

### 7.3 Berczy, Markham

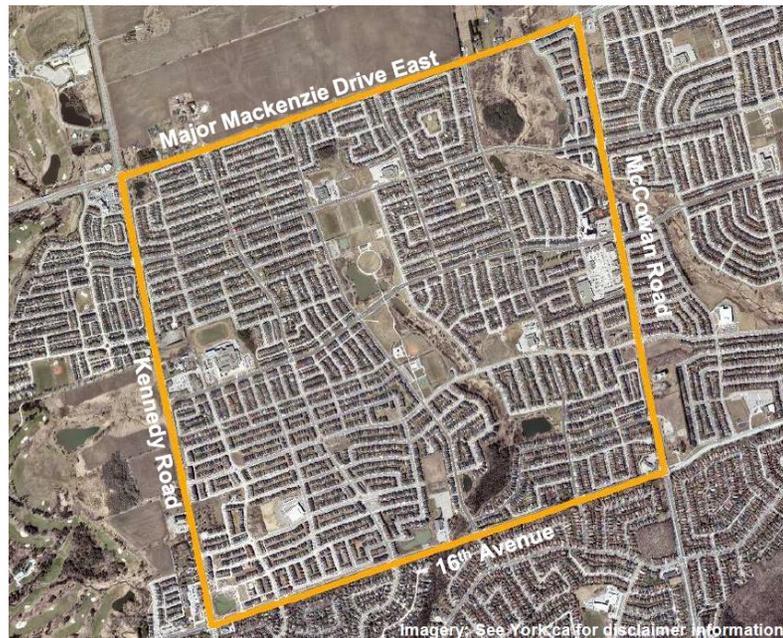
Berczy is located in the central part of the City of Markham, south of Major Mackenzie Drive East and west of McCowan Road. The area totals 399 net hectares and was 97% built out in 2016.

While the City of Markham may not typically be a good comparable for East Gwillimbury given it is the largest population centre in York

Region, the Berczy area is an exception given the similarities in unit mix.

Despite being planned for about 6% more single and semi-detached units than East Gwillimbury’s forecasted DGA residential growth, the Berczy area has yielded a high population density of **60 persons per net hectare**, with a forecasted population density of **62 persons per net hectare at full build-out**.

**Figure 13: Berczy, Markham**



Source: York Region

Berczy also has a very similar unit mix to what is forecast for the 181 net hectares of Whitebelt land expected to be added to East Gwillimbury’s DGA after 2036 (Table 15). The expected population

densities in Berczy indicate that the Whitebelt density target of 66 persons per net hectare is within a reasonable range of an existing example in York Region. With a higher proportion of townhouses and lower proportion of semi-detached units, it would be reasonable to assume that the Whitebelt lands could exceed the population densities in Berczy if built out as forecasted.

**Table 15**

Forecasted Housing Mix at Full Build-Out		
Housing Type	Berczy (Markham)	EG Whitebelt
Single-Detached	58%	57%
Semi-Detached	12%	5%
Townhouse <sup>^</sup>	26%	35%
Apartment <sup>*</sup>	4%	3%

<sup>^</sup>The townhouse category includes both traditional and stacked townhouse units. <sup>\*</sup>The apartment category includes both apartments and duplexes.  
Source: York Region Planning for Density in New Communities

## 7.4 Newmarket Northwest

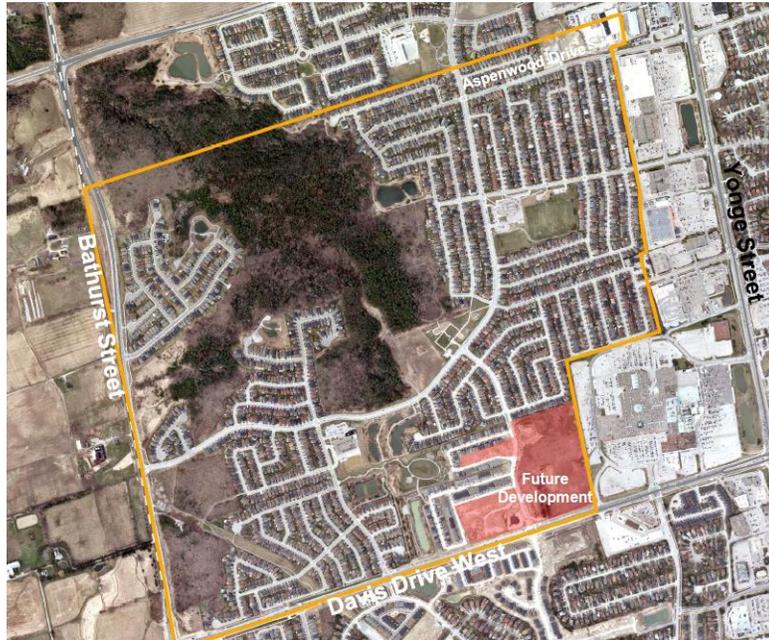
Newmarket Northwest is the closest study area to the Town of East Gwillimbury, located along the Newmarket-East Gwillimbury border, directly south of Green Lane (Figure 14).

Though the Newmarket Northwest area is planned for very few apartment units – just 1% of total units – it features a similar proportion of single-detached (56%) and townhouse units (30%) as are forecasted for East Gwillimbury’s growth to 2041.

Newmarket Northwest has a population density of **64 persons per net hectare**, with an expected density of **65 persons per net**

**hectare at build-out.** This is the second highest population density of the 12 study areas despite a lack of apartment units (1%) and its location outside of the denser population centres to the south.

**Figure 14: Newmarket Northwest**

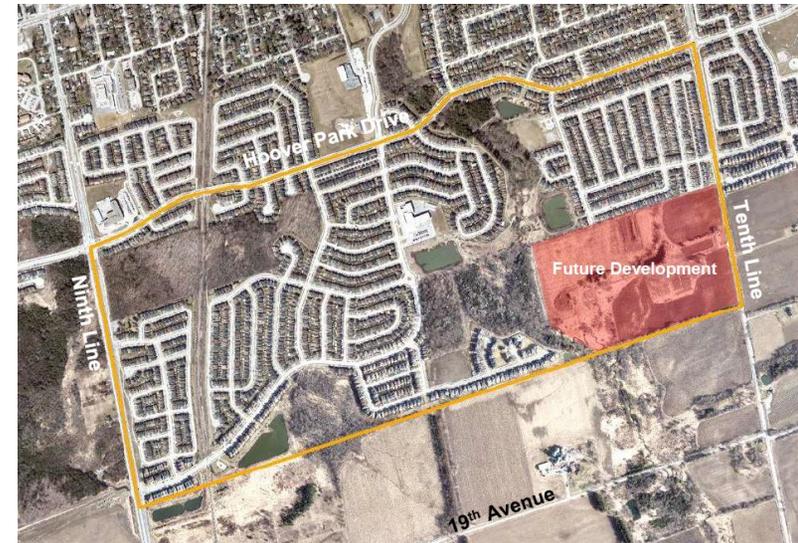


Source: York Region

## 7.5 Stouffville Southcentral

The final study area in our list is Stouffville Southcentral, located west of Tenth Line in the southeast end of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. The 134-hectare area is 83% built out, with a large 23-hectare parcel still to be redeveloped at its southeast corner.

**Figure 15: Stouffville Southcentral**



Source: York Region

Despite a high proportion of single-detached (63%) and semi-detached (21%) units, Stouffville Southcentral has the highest current population density of the 12 study areas at **69 persons per net hectare**, with a forecasted **build-out density of 65 persons per net hectare** – behind only Wismer Commons in Markham.

Stouffville Southcentral is an example of how even with a high proportion of single-detached homes, population densities can be pushed higher. A survey of sold out single-detached projects in this area reveals that many offerings included lots as narrow as 30' to 34'. Decreasing lot sizes below the current offerings of 36' to 45' lots being marketed in East Gwillimbury could aid in ensuring that the Town is able to hit the Region's density targets in the future.

## 7.6 Summary of Findings

- Despite being planned and beginning construction prior to the Region setting their minimum density target of 70 persons and jobs per net hectare for new communities, the 12 study areas analyzed as part of the Region's *Planning for Density in New Communities* are mostly meeting or coming close to the density target.
- These study areas provide several comparable examples of what can be expected in terms of densities in East Gwillimbury's DGA lands – demonstrating that the market can reasonably deliver on density targets in line with what has been forecast for East Gwillimbury.
- Ten of 12 study areas are expected to feature population densities above 50 persons per net hectare upon full build-out, five of which are expected to surpass 60 persons per net hectare. These totals are in line with the forecasted population densities for East Gwillimbury's DGA and Whitebelt lands of 56 and 66 persons per net hectare, respectively.
- Density is driven by land value, which in turn is driven by demand. As demand increases and land values rise, developers must increase densities in order to achieve satisfactory returns. This has led to decreasing single-detached lot sizes in many York Region communities – as low as 25' to 30' – as well as an increasing amount of townhouse development. Eventually, this can also lead to increased stacked townhouse and apartment development.

## 8.0 Density Conclusions and Final Thoughts

### 8.1 Designated Greenfield Area

The evidence from several study areas throughout York Region – ones from comparable communities and with similar unit mixes – indicate that **York Region’s assumption of 56 persons per net hectare in East Gwillimbury’s DGA lands is a reasonable target that is possible to achieve over the forecast period.**

However, it will require that lands not subject to current development applications are built out at a higher population density than the overall target given that these DGA development applications are estimated to have a lower population density of 40 persons per net hectare.

In order for the overall DGA to hit the 56 persons per net hectare target set by the Region, the 657 net hectares of DGA land not accounted for in the current development applications would have to accommodate growth at a rate of 74 persons per net hectare. Given the mix of units that are still forecasted to be built – with a lower proportion of single-detached units – and the likelihood of a continued decline in lot sizes over time as land values increase, this population density is considered to be achievable.

Further, while the Region has assumed a modest number of apartment and stacked townhouse units built to 2041, some of the work recently completed by the Town could conceivably lead to an increase in these numbers, and in turn increase the population densities beyond the Regional forecasts. The Green Lane

Secondary Plan in particular notes a build-out with 970 high-rise apartment units (up to 20-storeys) in the Secondary Plan area, as well as 3,500 medium density units that could include townhouses, stacked townhouses, and low-rise apartments.

The only reason that the Town could fall short of the 2041 density target for the DGA is if market pressures lead to a higher proportion of single-detached units being built in the growth timeline than what is forecasted by the Region. This would require additional Whitebelt land to be added to the DGA as part of an urban boundary expansion to accommodate the 2041 population. However, with prices and land values expected to continue to rise, this outcome is less likely. Even in this scenario, the overall population density would likely still end up above 50 persons per net hectare, remaining close to the Region’s target.

#### 8.1.1 Density Related Policies

In order to protect against the market dictating a lower population density in the DGA than the forecasted 56 persons per net hectare, consideration could be given to creating policies around density targets in the new Official Plan.

These policies could state that all new residential development applications in the DGA meet the necessary 74 persons per net hectare (or other determined figure) required to reach the

overarching population density target of 56 persons per net hectare in the DGA.

This type of policy would ensure that the Town is able to meet or exceed the density targets set by the Region, as well as reduce the need for additional Whitebelt land prior to 2041, leaving more land for increased development in the 2041 to 2051 growth timeline (or beyond).

## 8.2 Whitebelt Lands

The population density target for the 181 net hectares of Whitebelt land to be added to the DGA after 2036 is notably higher than the DGA target at 66 persons per net hectare.

However, areas like Stouffville Southcentral provide strong evidence that a low-density area can achieve similar population densities, particularly when low-density lot sizes are reduced. We would expect that lot sizes will continue to decline in East Gwillimbury in the coming decades in response to reduced greenfield availability and increasing home prices – as they have elsewhere.

Further, the Whitebelt lands in East Gwillimbury are proposed to include a lower proportion of single-detached (57%) and semi-detached homes (5%), and a much higher proportion of townhouses (35%) than in Stouffville Southcentral (63%, 21%, 16%, respectively). The higher densities associated with townhouses will be useful in reaching this density target.

The Berczy study area in Markham also features a similar unit mix to what has been forecast for these Whitebelt lands, yielding an expected population density of 62 persons per net hectare upon full build-out – in range of the target for East Gwillimbury’s Whitebelt lands.

Given the above, NBLC believes that **the population density of 66 persons per net hectare for the Whitebelt lands is reasonable.**

# Appendix B: Employment Background Study

# Land Needs Assessment Background Study: Office and Employment Lands

Town of East Gwillimbury  
December 2020



## Land Needs Assessment Background Study:

### Office and Employment Lands

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction .....	77
2.0	East Gwillimbury Employment Profile .....	78
3.0	The Office Market .....	96
4.0	The Employment Land Market.....	104
5.0	Population Related Employment Market .....	116
6.0	Conclusions .....	132

*The conclusions contained within this report have been prepared based on both primary and secondary data sources. NBLC makes every effort to ensure the data is correct but cannot guarantee its accuracy. It is also important to note that it is not possible to fully document all factors or account for all changes that may occur in the future and influence the viability of any development. NBLC therefore assumes no responsibility for losses sustained as a result of implementing any recommendation provided in this report.*

*This report has been prepared solely for the purposes outlined herein and is not to be relied upon, or used for any other purposes, or by any other party without the prior written authorization from N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited.*

## 1.0 Introduction

N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd. ('NBLC') was retained by the Town of East Gwillimbury ('the Town') as part of a larger multi-disciplinary team, led by The Planning Partnership ('TPP'), tasked with undertaking an Official Plan Review ('OPR') for the Town.

As part of the OPR, NBLC was tasked with completing a Land Needs Assessment and Capacity Analysis to evaluate the assumptions in York Region's most recent Municipal Comprehensive Review ('MCR') for East Gwillimbury (2015), and to estimate the population and jobs that would require full build-out of the Town's Whitebelt lands.

As part of the Land Needs Assessment and Capacity Analysis, we have completed two background reports that summarize our research. This background report assesses employment uses in the Town of East Gwillimbury. Population and residential growth are assessed under separate cover.

This employment background report first provides an overview of East Gwillimbury's employment profile and existing employment densities before providing a more detailed analysis of the existing and potential markets for major office, employment land, and population-related employment to determine whether the Region's employment density assumptions are reasonable.

The findings of this report and the population and residential growth background report will help to inform the assumptions in our capacity analysis to provide guidance to the Town on what is considered a reasonable assumption for future build-out of

available development lands and how much land may be required to accommodate the growth previously forecast.

Employment Land Uses in East Gwillimbury



Source: York Region (Top), Parkin Architects (Bottom)

## 2.0 East Gwillimbury Employment Profile

The following chapter assesses the Town of East Gwillimbury's employment market characteristics and profile.

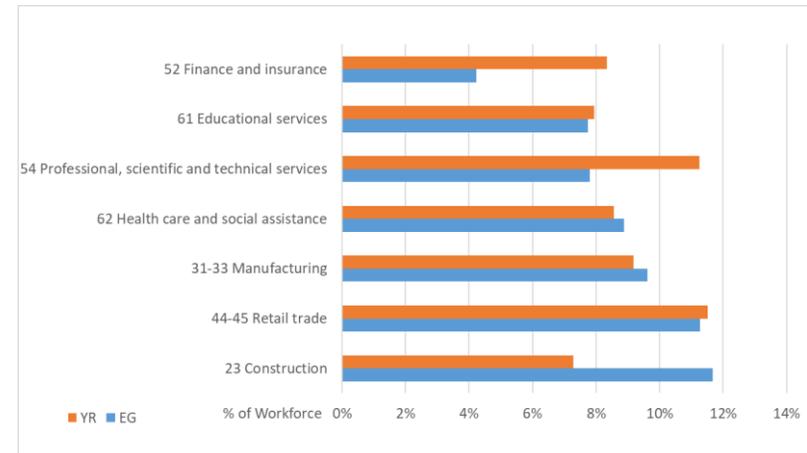
### 2.1 Employment Profile of Residents

As of the 2016 Census, East Gwillimbury had a population of about 23,991 people. Of this total, 19,340 of its residents are above the age of 15, and 13,800 people are active in the labour force. This represents a participation rate of over 71% and an unemployment rate of 5.7%. This is a higher participation rate and lower unemployment rate than York Region as a whole.

As illustrated by Figure 1, residents in East Gwillimbury are primarily employed in construction, retail, manufacturing, health care, educational services, and professional services. These sectors account for nearly 60% of all jobs held by residents in the Town. Similar findings are also found in York Region; however, York Region has more residents employed in the professional and finance/insurance sector and fewer residents employed in the construction sector relative to East Gwillimbury.

The median income of households in East Gwillimbury was also higher (\$114,922) than York Region as a whole (\$106,298).

Figure 1: Top Employment Sector (NAICS) of Residents in East Gwillimbury and York Region



Source: 2016 Census Profile

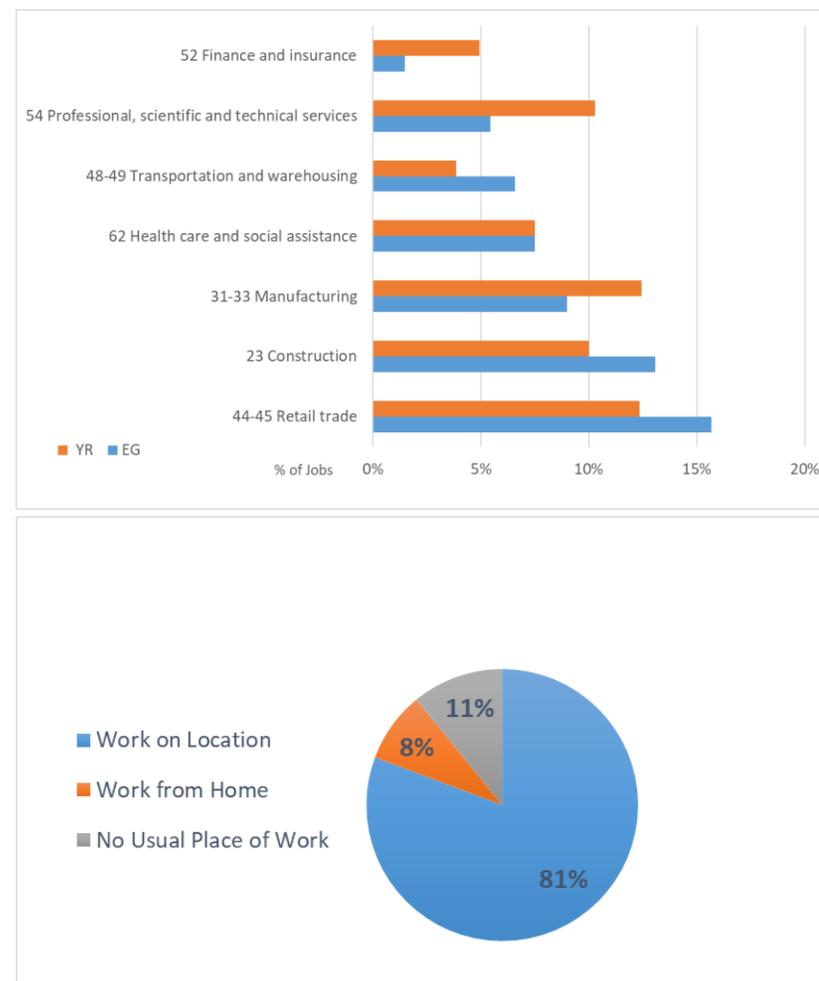
## 2.2 Characteristics of Jobs within the Community

While the employment characteristics of residents is an important consideration, this analysis requires that the employment market of the municipality be well understood. The following summarizes the key characteristics of local employment currently offered in East Gwillimbury.

As illustrated by Figure 2, there are some notable differences from Figure 1:

- Employment is less concentrated in specific sectors, with more varied employment across multiple sectors of work.
- Retail trade (16%), construction (13%), manufacturing (9%), transportation/warehousing (7%), and health care/social assistance (7%) are the top five sectors, representing 52% of all jobs in East Gwillimbury.
- While similar findings are observed across York Region, East Gwillimbury has a higher proportion of jobs in construction, retail, and transportation/warehousing. On the other hand, East Gwillimbury also has much fewer jobs in professional services, as well as finance, relative to York Region.
- Overall, 81% of jobs in East Gwillimbury were on-site at a usual location, whereas 8% of jobs allow for work from home and 11% of jobs have no fixed workplace address. Nearly 60% of jobs with no fixed workplace address are in the construction and transportation NAICS category, which is logical given the nature of employment within these sectors.

**Figure 2: Top Employment Sector (NAICS) of Jobs in East Gwillimbury and York Region (Top) and Place of Work (Bottom)**



Source: Statistics Canada Place of Work Data – 2016 Census

Between the 2011 and 2016 census years, East Gwillimbury grew by 2,007 jobs, representing a growth rate of 30% (Table 1). By comparison, York Region's employment grew by approximately 12%. As illustrated by Table 1, East Gwillimbury's employment growth was driven by a few notable sectors:

- Of the 2,007 jobs added to East Gwillimbury's market, the construction (614 new jobs) and transportation and warehousing (312 new jobs) sectors accounted for nearly half of this growth.
- The next major growth sectors contributing to job creation in East Gwillimbury were the education, health care/social assistance, accommodation/food services, and public administration sectors. These sectors, combined with construction and transportation/warehousing, account for 85% of all jobs created in East Gwillimbury over this period.
- At the same time, East Gwillimbury lost jobs in the finance/insurance and professional, scientific, and technical services sector. Conversely, York Region experienced significant growth in these sectors.
- York Region also experienced similar growth in the construction, education, health care/social assistance, and accommodation/food services sector.

## 2.3 York Region Employment Projections

York Region has utilized census and other data to estimate the number of jobs that fall under the following categories as defined by the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology:

- **Population-Related Employment (PRE):** Jobs that primarily serve a resident population, including retail, education, health care, local government, and work-at-home employment. The vast majority is in community areas.
- **Major Office Employment (MOE):** Office jobs in free-standing buildings more than 20,000 net square feet (1,858 m<sup>2</sup>).
- **Employment Land Employment (ELE):** Jobs accommodated primarily in industrial-type buildings. The vast majority are located within business parks and industrial areas (i.e. employment areas) within settlement areas. In older urban centres, some share of this type of employment also occurs in more dispersed locations. There are also some jobs in this category on lands outside settlement areas with existing permissions.
- **Rural-Based Employment (RBE):** Jobs scattered throughout rural lands that include agriculture and primary industries as well as other uses that might typically be found in existing employment areas located outside of settlement areas on rural lands. Uses will typically include agriculture-related uses such as feed or fertilizer facilities, small-scale manufacturing or construction businesses run from rural and farm properties and some scattered retail or service users.

Table 1

Change in Employment for East Gwillimbury and York Region by NAICS Code - 2011 to 2016 Place of Work Data								
NAICS Code	East Gwillimbury				York Region			
	2011	2016	Change	% of all Growth	2011	2016	Change	% of all Growth
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,649</b>	<b>8,656</b>	<b>2,007</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>485,359</b>	<b>544,062</b>	<b>58,703</b>	<b>-</b>
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	361	274	-88	-4%	2,518	2,351	-167	-0.3%
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0	39	39	2%	467	529	62	0.1%
22 Utilities	0	0	0	0%	1,872	2,022	149	0.3%
23 Construction	517	1,131	614	31%	43,066	54,467	11,401	19%
31-33 Manufacturing	772	776	4	0.2%	64,427	67,732	3,305	6%
41 Wholesale trade	263	317	53	3%	43,557	36,749	-6,809	-12%
44-45 Retail trade	1,274	1,356	82	4%	58,825	67,156	8,330	14%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	258	570	312	16%	17,730	20,878	3,148	5%
51 Information and cultural industries	190	247	57	3%	10,745	11,110	364	1%
52 Finance and insurance	98	129	31	2%	23,694	26,822	3,127	5%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	60	134	74	4%	11,546	15,506	3,960	7%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	510	470	-40	-2%	50,135	55,915	5,779	10%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	0	0	0	0%	747	1,051	304	1%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	260	325	66	3%	20,827	23,984	3,157	5%
61 Educational services	295	549	254	13%	31,275	36,025	4,750	8%
62 Health care and social assistance	498	649	151	8%	33,939	41,975	8,035	14%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	216	344	127	6%	9,919	11,342	1,423	2%
72 Accommodation and food services	362	556	194	10%	24,804	31,106	6,302	11%
81 Other services (except public administration)	386	289	-97	-5%	21,352	22,915	1,563	3%
91 Public administration	328	502	174	9%	13,912	14,430	518	1%

Source: Statistics Canada Place of Work Census Data. Note: Yellow highlight indicates top growth sector in each municipality.

Overall, the census data indicates that East Gwillimbury has approximately 8,651 jobs. However, York Region estimates the number of jobs within East Gwillimbury to be 9,500 for the 2016 census year. This discrepancy is likely due to place of work differences (i.e. how work from home employment is treated).

Despite the discrepancy, York Region has sorted the NAICS employment data into each of the required categories and has forecasted the employment growth of each category to 2041. As illustrated by Table 2, there is currently no MOE in the Town, and this category is expected to only grow modestly to 2041.

Employment Area Employment (ELE) and Population Related Employment (PRE) currently accommodates 82% of all jobs in the Town. York Region forecasts that these two categories will accommodate 96% of all employment growth to 2041.

RBE currently accommodates 18% of the Town’s employment and is expected to grow by 500 jobs to 2041. How the RBE will be affected by continued urban expansion and development must also be accounted for.

Table 2

Projected Employment Growth for East Gwillimbury 2016 - 2041			
Employment Type	2016	2041	Total Change 2016 - 2041
Major Office	0	500	500
Employment Area	3,400	16,700	13,300
Population-Related	4,400	16,700	12,300
Rural	1,700	2,200	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>36,100</b>	<b>26,600</b>

Source: York Region

## 2.4 The Supply of Employment Lands

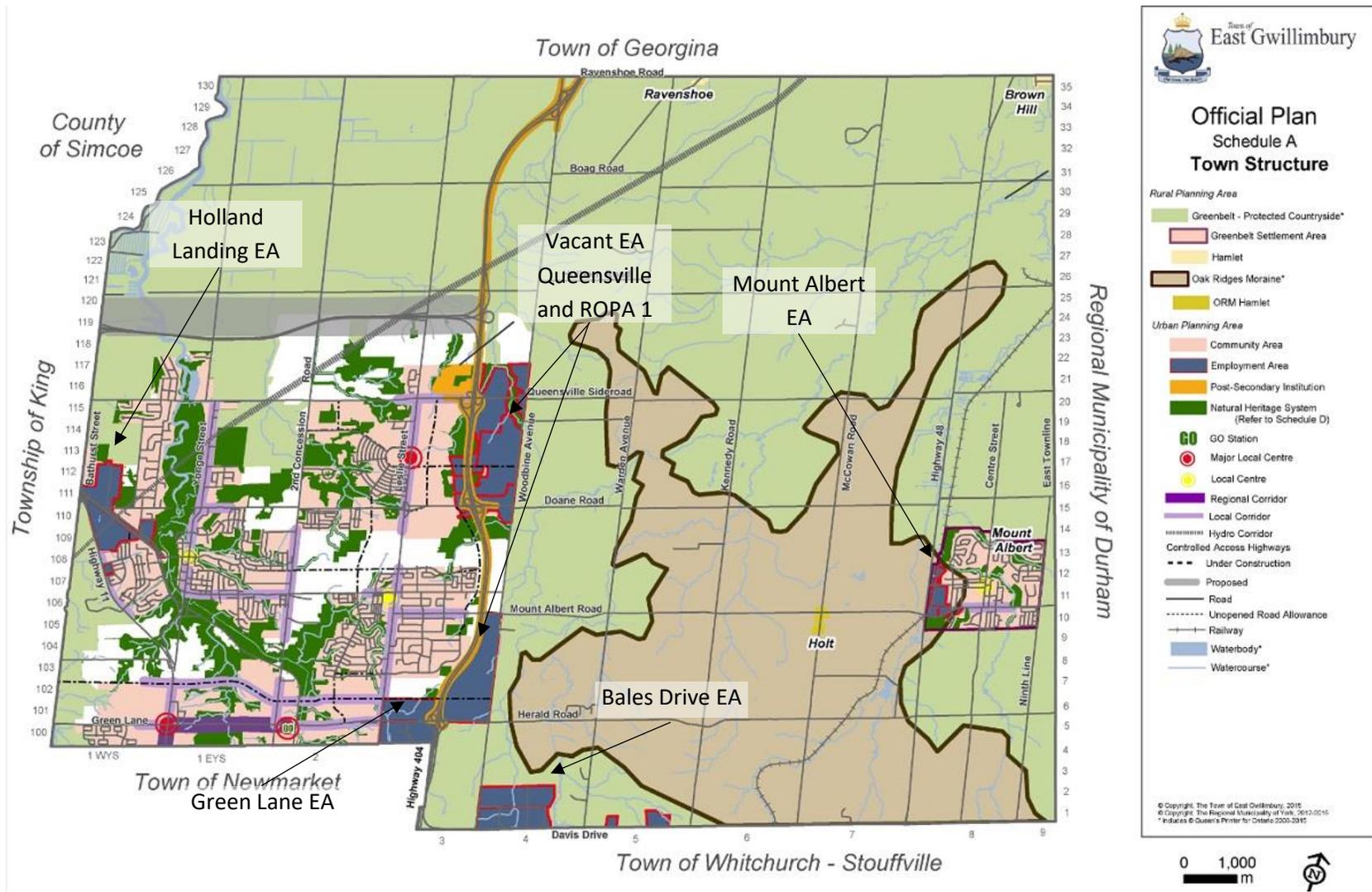
East Gwillimbury currently has six Employment Areas, which are large areas of land in the municipality that contain a variety of work activities. As noted by Table 2, 36% of all existing jobs in the Town are within these Employment Areas, which is forecasted to increase to 46% by 2041.

The remaining employment noted in Table 2 is accommodated throughout the Town’s “Community Area” in the form of population related uses as well as rural employment outside of the Town’s Settlement Area. Figure 3 on the following page illustrates the Town Structure, which identifies the Town’s Employment Lands, Community Area, protected areas (e.g. Natural Heritage System, Greenbelt), and other relevant features.

Overall, the Region has forecasted an employment density of 45 jobs per hectare for employment lands in the Designated Greenfield Area, with a density of 40 jobs per hectare on any Whitebelt employment lands required to accommodate the forecasted growth to 2041. However, not all employment areas will build out at the same densities.

Through York Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review, the Region evaluated each of East Gwillimbury’s Employment Areas through the *Planning for Employment Background Report (2019)*. From a macro perspective, the Region identified the following key findings:

Figure 3: East Gwillimbury Town Structure



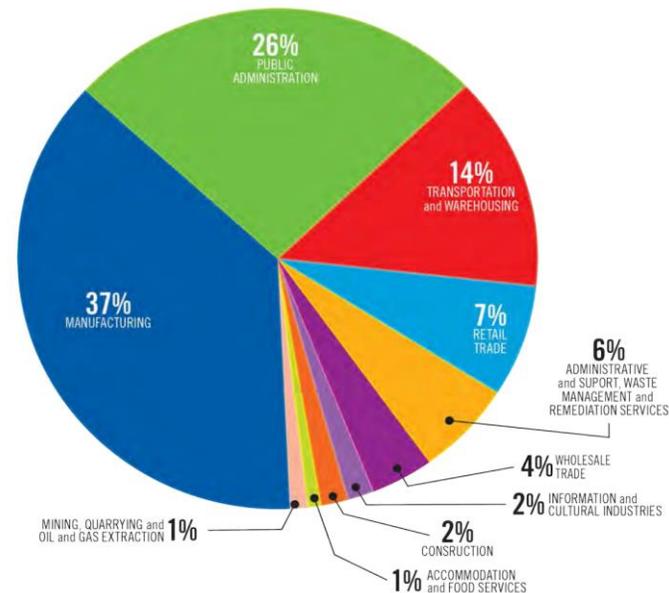
- According to the Region, there were 3,360 jobs within the Town’s Employment Areas, which accounted for 42% of the Town’s total employment. This appears to be based on the Region’s employment survey, and not the census.
- Over the past ten years, employment growth in the Town’s Employment Areas has increased by 146%, adding almost 2,000 jobs between 2008 and 2018. Much of this growth was in the public administration, manufacturing, and transportation/warehousing sectors.
- The distribution of employment within these Employment Areas is illustrated by Figure 4. As illustrated, employment is dominated by public administration, manufacturing, and transportation/ warehousing, which combine to account for 77% of all jobs in the Town’s Employment Areas.
- Of the total jobs in the Town’s Employment Areas, 60% are services producing and 40% are goods producing. Of the service producing sector, approximately 10% are within the retail and personal services sector.
- The Town has approximately 449 hectares of Employment Land, of which 322 hectares are currently vacant. Additionally, there are 12 sites (27 hectares) of Employment Land with potential for intensification.
- The total existing density of all occupied Employment Areas in the Town is **31 jobs per hectare**.

Overall, York Region concludes that East Gwillimbury contains a large supply of Employment Land that is strategically located with access to Highway 404. Further, the availability of a large supply of vacant industrial land of all sizes provides a significant opportunity for the future development of these lands.

The following analysis evaluates each of the Employment Areas in the Town. The analysis utilizes the assessment undertaken by the Region in their Planning for Employment Background Study as well as additional data and analysis collected by NBLC.

Figure 4

DISTRIBUTION of EMPLOYMENT by SECTOR 2018

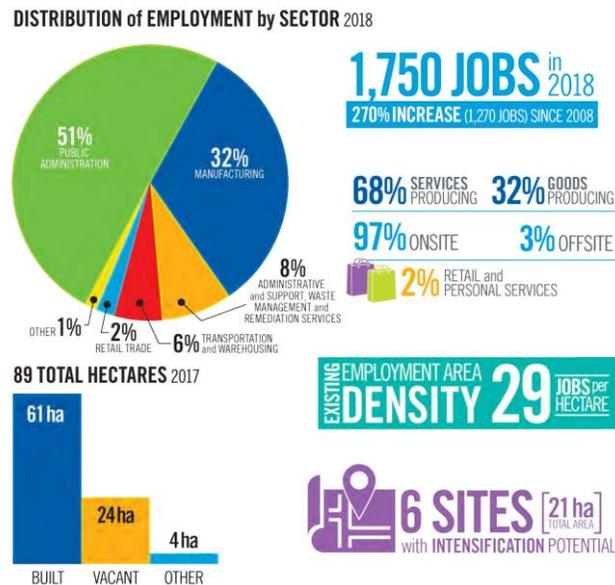


Source: Region of York Employment Area Profiles (2019)

### 2.4.1 Bales Drive Employment Area

The Bales Drive node is East Gwillimbury’s most active and built-out Employment Area (“EA”). The EA is located near the intersection of Davis Drive and Woodbine Avenue, just east of the Highway 404 and Davis Drive interchange at the southeastern end of the Town (Figure 3). Key stats from the Region’s Employment Area Profile for this area are illustrated in Figure 5, with Figure 6, on the following page, further identifying the current uses and employment estimates from the Region’s employment survey.

Figure 5: Bales Drive EA Key Stats



Source: Region of York Employment Area Profiles (2019)

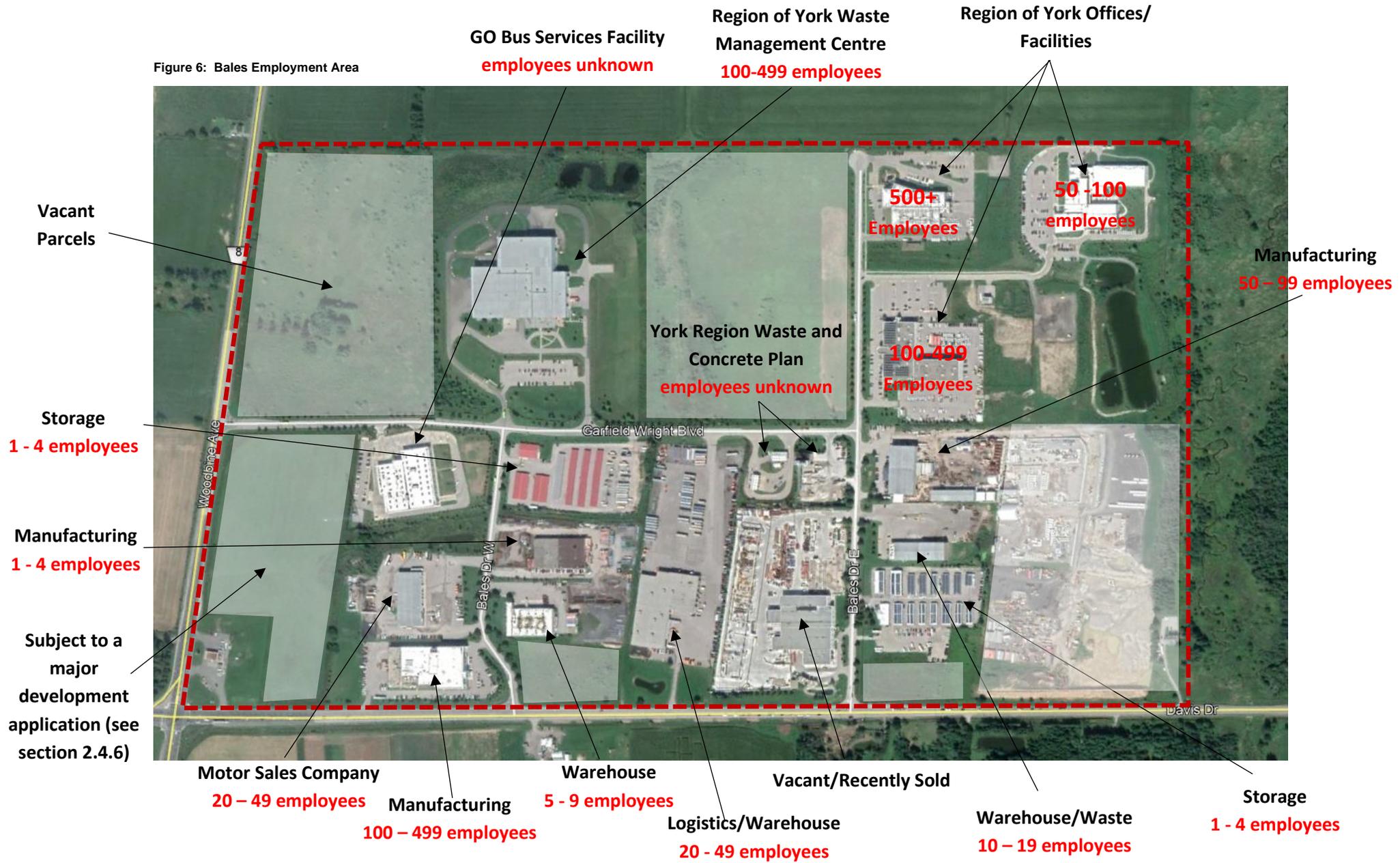
As illustrated by Figure 6, there is a wide range of employment uses in the Bales EA. While the entire EA may accommodate upwards of 1,750 jobs across 61 hectares of utilized land (29 jobs per hectare), this is heavily influenced by the presence of Region of York facilities and offices. As noted by Figure 5, over half of the employment in the Bales EA is within the public administration sector (i.e. York Region Waste Facility, York Region Policy Facility, York Region Paramedic Headquarters, etc.).

Based on the employment estimates for these uses from York Region’s employment survey, the group of three Regional offices at 70, 80, and 90 Bales Drive could accommodate between 750 and 1,500 jobs over 15.2 hectares, or between 42 and 65 jobs per hectare.

York Region Paramedic Headquarters - 80 Bales Drive E



Figure 6: Bales Employment Area



However, other uses such as the self storage facilities (<5 jobs per hectare) and most warehousing/manufacturing uses (<15 jobs per hectare) are well below this threshold. In fact, the only private employment use in the Bales Employment Area that is above 20 jobs per hectare is:

- 2 Bales Drive West, a manufacturing plant operated by Kelson Company Limited. York Region estimates that the plant employs 100-499 employees on the 2.2 hectare site (45 – 230 jobs per hectare).
- 102 Bales Drive East, a manufacturing property operated by Technicore Underground Inc. York Region estimates that the site employs 50-99 employees on the 2.3 hectare site (21 – 43 jobs per hectare).

Of note, the property at the southwest corner of Davis Drive and Woodbine Avenue is subject to a significant development application as noted in Figure 6. This application is assessed in Section 3.4.6 to follow and is forecasted to accommodate approximately 49 jobs per hectare.

Overall, the Region of York assumes that the area will build-out at **30 jobs per net hectare**. Based on the existing densities and the development application noted above, this appears to be appropriate for long-term planning purposes. The lands are designated General Employment Area and are designed to provide locations in the Town for a broad range of employment land uses, including industrial, manufacturing, assembly, distribution, service industrial uses, and outdoor storage. It is likely that this area will

build out with a wide range of employment uses such as low-intensity manufacturing/storage/industrial with outdoor storage, as well as higher intensity uses. It is therefore reasonable that the current employment density is maintained as intensification continues to occur.

York Region estimates that there are 24 hectares of vacant land in the EA currently, with an additional 21 hectares of land available for intensification. However, East Gwillimbury notes that almost all of the properties do not currently have sewer, hydro, or gas but all are serviced with water.

#### 2.4.2 Green Lane Employment Area

The Green Lane EA is strategically located near the Highway 404 and Green Lane interchange at the southern segment of the Town. The EA is therefore strategically located along Highway 404, proving good visibility from the highway, but also is a short distance from East Gwillimbury GO Station to the west as well as the larger employment area within Newmarket immediately to the south. According to York Region, the Newmarket EA that is immediately south of the Green Lane EA accommodates employment densities between 56 and 65 jobs per hectare.

As illustrated by Figure 7 and 8, the Green Lane EA is largely underutilized, with only 11 of the 29 hectares (37%) currently built out. Further, the employment uses fronting Leslie Street (gas station, auto parts/ wholesale) include low employment densities typical of these uses (>20 jobs per hectare). The sports wholesaling/distribution building on Harry Walker Parkway also

appears to accommodate an employment density below 30 jobs per hectare based on the employment totals estimated by the Region’s Employment Survey.

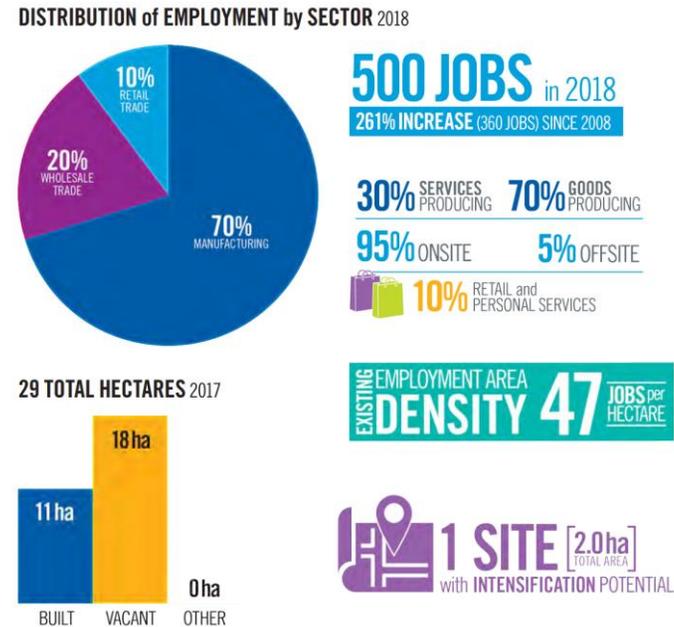
The high density of 47 jobs per hectare across the entire EA appears to be driven by the Dynamic Suspension building, which is estimated to employ 400 people<sup>1</sup>. This building, if employing 400 people, represents a density of over 80 jobs per hectare, which is extraordinary for a typical manufacturing use. Without this building, the existing density of the area would be well below the 47 jobs per hectare threshold.

Overall, the Region of York assumes that the area will build-out at **50 jobs per net hectare**. This will require that additional high-employment industrial uses locate in the area. Any low-intensity manufacturing, construction, storage, logistics, warehousing, or other similar use would likely not result in this density being achieved

York Region estimates that there are 18 hectares of vacant land in the EA currently. East Gwillimbury notes that all these lands have water and sewer services. The lands are designated General Employment Area that is designed to provide locations in the Town for a broad range of employment land uses, including industrial, manufacturing, assembly, distribution, outdoor storage, and service industrial uses.

<sup>1</sup> Estimate from CoStar. Regional estimates were unavailable for this property at the time of writing. The business appears to offer shift work 24 hours per day, explaining the high employment total.

Figure 7: Green Lane EA Key Stats



Source: Region of York Employment Area Profiles (2019)

Figure 8: Green Lane Employment Area



Gas Station  
1 - 4 employees

Auto Sale  
Tools/Warehouse  
20 - 49  
employees

Vacant  
Parcels

Warehouse/Manufacturing  
~400 employees (from Co-  
Stat) no data from Region  
Employment Survey

Warehouse/Wholesale  
50 - 99 employees

### 2.4.3 Holland Landing Employment Area

The Holland Landing EA is located at the western edge of the Town and is largely dominated by low-intensity manufacturing, industrial, retail, and other similar uses. The EA is approximately 58 hectares in size, of which 30 hectares are currently built out. There remains 23 hectares of vacant land in addition to two properties that could experience intensification on roughly 3 hectares.

According to York Region (Figure 9), the EA accommodates 570 jobs at a density of approximately 19 jobs per hectare. The EA has also experienced employment decline since 2008, which is primarily associated with the manufacturing sector. Overall, the EA is less strategically located than the Town's central EA's adjacent to the Highway 404, but also offers space in the Town for lower intensity and lower value employment functions. Overall, the Region of York assumes that the area will build-out at **20 jobs per net hectare**, which appears appropriate.

While there are a wide variety of vacant land parcels and sizes available, most of the lands are currently not serviced and may also be complicated development blocks from an accessibility perspective.

### 2.4.4 Mount Albert Employment Area

The Mount Albert EA is located at the eastern edge of the Town within the Mount Albert community. Like the Holland Landing EA, Mount Albert is less strategically located within the Town and has

experienced a decline in employment over the past decade. Employment is generally focused on services with nearly 70% of employment within the retail sector (e.g. Home Hardware, Foodland). Only about 33% of the EA is built out, with 6 hectares of remaining vacant land in addition to 1 hectare of intensification potential.

According to York Region (Figure 10), the EA accommodates 150 jobs at a density of approximately 26 jobs per hectare. Overall, the Region of York assumes that the area will build-out at **25 jobs per net hectare**, which appears appropriate.

Notwithstanding the above, many of the vacant lands within the EA are small relative to the preferences of typical ELE demand and are also located in close proximity to low-density residential uses that will limit their potential for industrial functions. Given the isolated location, it is also likely that these lands will continue to be used for retail purposes, which questions whether they will perform an ELE function at all. A new retail building is proposed in the area at 2 Don Rose Boulevard.

### 2.4.5 Highway 404/Queensville and ROPA 1

The final two EA's are both primarily vacant, accommodating 254 net hectares of employment land. Most lands are either directly fronting the Highway 404 or are in very close proximity to the highway and/or GO Station. While the lands have not been built out at the current time, they remain highly marketable given these strategic locational characteristics.

Both areas have a wide variety of land parcels available for development, ranging in size from 2 acres to over 100 acres, with many being over 20 acres. However, servicing to the area remains a challenge and must be addressed for development to move forward. The lands are primarily designated a mix of general and prestige employment, the latter of which encourages higher intensity employment uses (e.g. office, industrial buildings with no outdoor storage, hotels).

York Region assumes that these areas will build out at **50 jobs per hectare**, which will be assessed in more detail later in this report.

#### 2.4.6 Development Applications in Employment Areas

There are some noteworthy development applications to identify within the Town's Employment Areas.

There are currently two minor applications in the Holland Landing EA, including a proposal to expand the existing storage facility at 98 Sluse Road and the establishment of a new warehouse with outdoor storage at 73 Sluse Road.

Within the Bales EA, there is a major application for a number of industrial, office, and ancillary restaurant and commercial services over three phases at 17611 Woodbine Avenue at the intersection of Davis Drive and Woodbine Avenue (identified on Figure 6). The proposed concept for the site is illustrated on Figure 12 and is proposing over 208,000 square feet of commercial space that is generally comprised of 145,000 square feet of industrial and

ancillary office as well as 63,000 square feet of commercial and retail services. Assuming an employment density of 1 job per 500 square feet of commercial employment and 1 job per 800 square feet of ELE employment<sup>2</sup>, this development could accommodate roughly 307 jobs across the 6.3 hectare site, representing an employment density of 49 jobs per hectare.

### 2.5 East Gwillimbury's Office Market

At the current time, East Gwillimbury does not have a major office market, which is confirmed by the census data and York Region's 2016 baseline for the Town (Table 2). Outside of some medical and service uses, and a small number of homes used as office space, there are no major office uses in the Town at the current time. The office market is further assessed in Section 3.0 of this report.

### 2.6 Population Related Employment Market

Population-related employment ('PRE') accounts for a significant proportion of jobs in East Gwillimbury (46% in 2016) and the number of PRE jobs will continue to grow as the Town builds out to 2041 and beyond. A detailed assessment of the PRE-market in East Gwillimbury can be found in Section 5.0 of this report.

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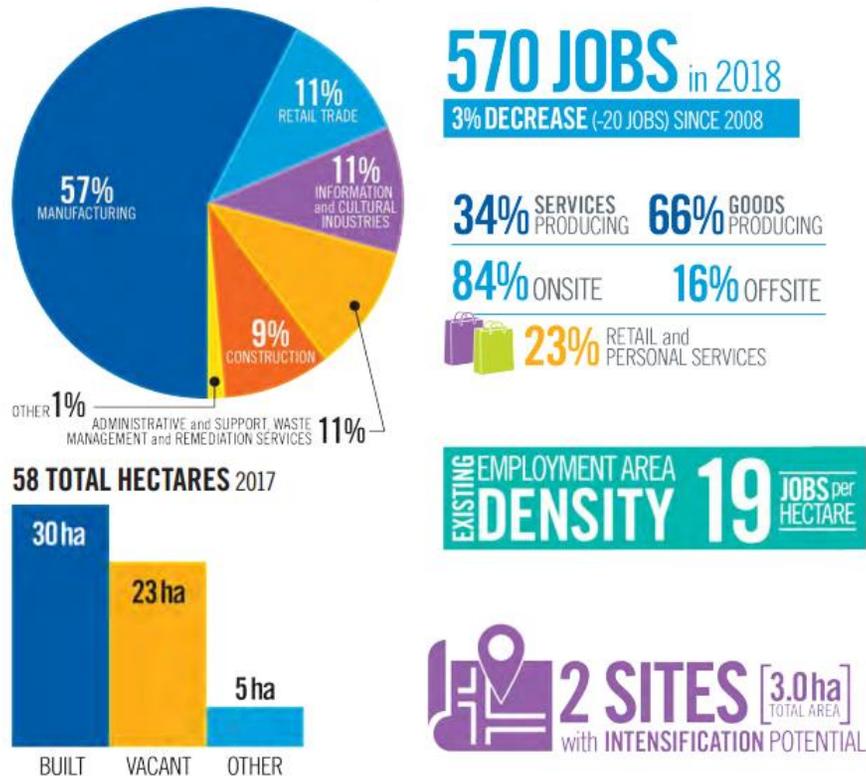
<sup>2</sup> Thresholds within the Town of East Gwillimbury Development Charges Background Study 2019.

Figure 9

## HOLLAND LANDING EAST GWILLIMBURY

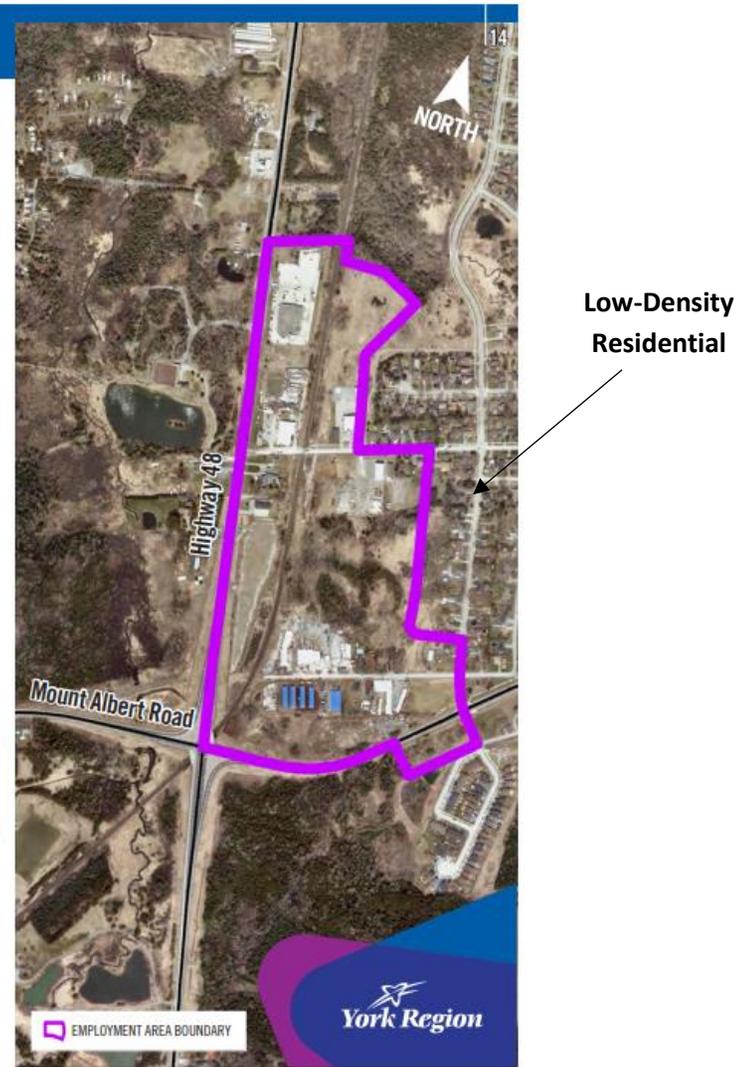
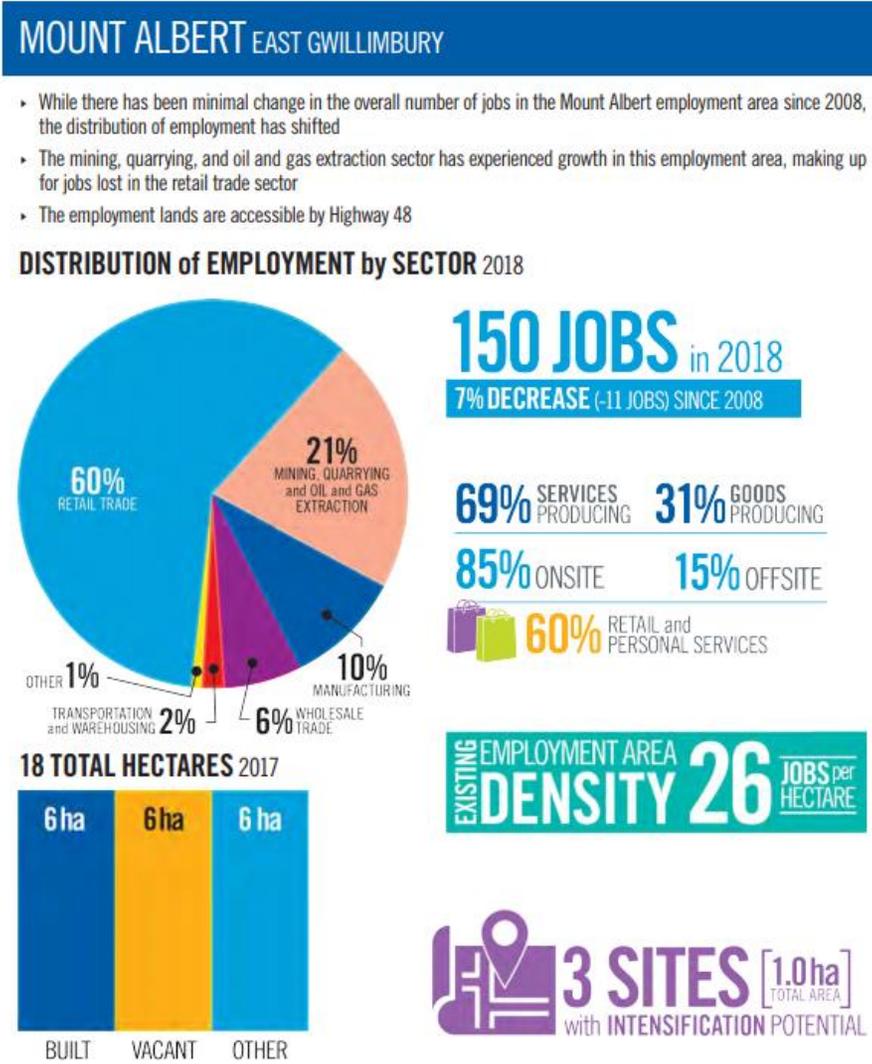
- ▶ The manufacturing sector, although declining in overall employment from 2008 to 2018, accounts for the largest share of employment (57 per cent)
- ▶ Over the past ten years, employment growth in the information and cultural industries and administrative and support, waste management and remediation services sectors has offset job loss in the manufacturing sector by adding 106 jobs to the employment area

### DISTRIBUTION of EMPLOYMENT by SECTOR 2018



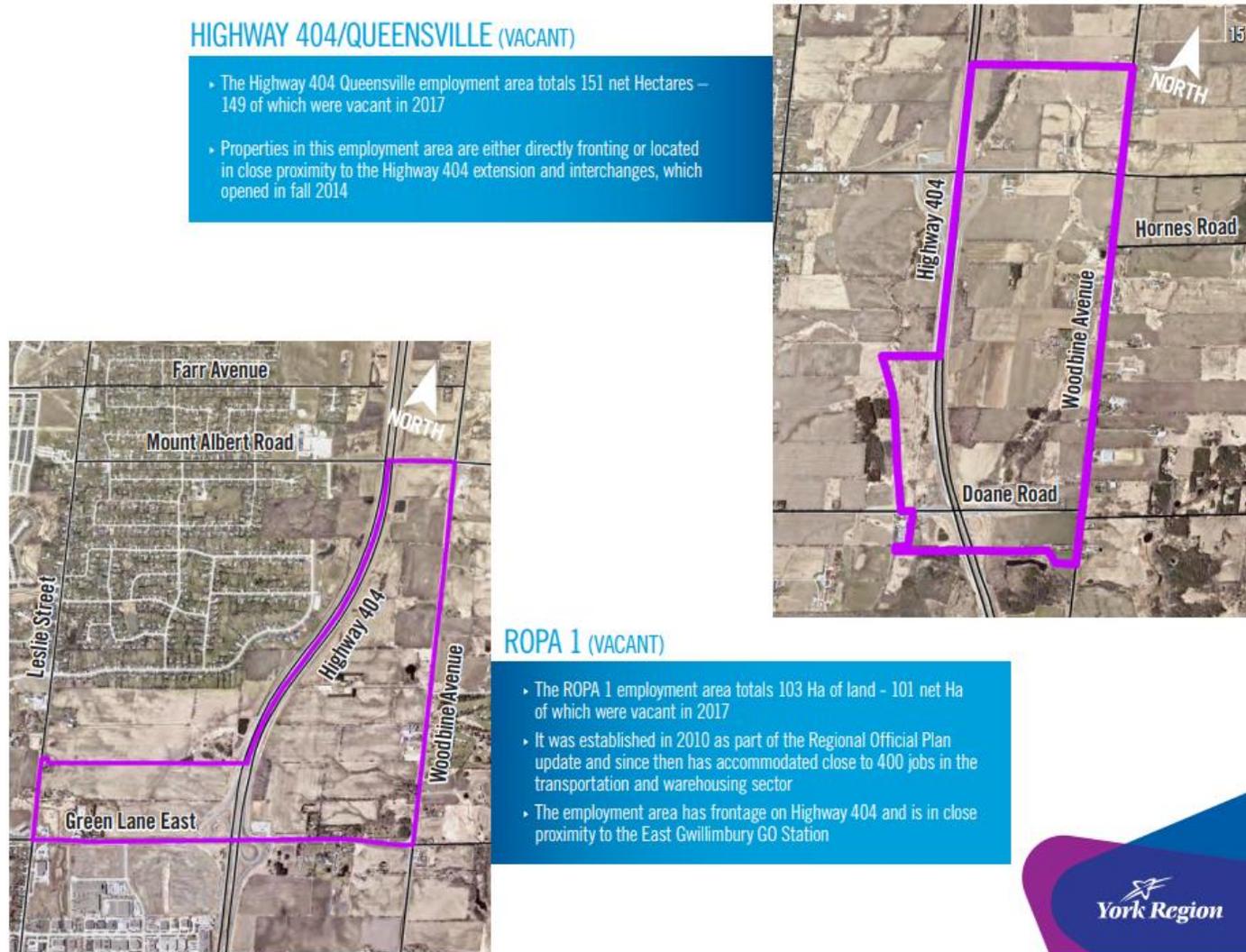
Source: Region of York Employment Area Profiles (2019)

Figure 10



Source: Region of York Employment Area Profiles (2019)

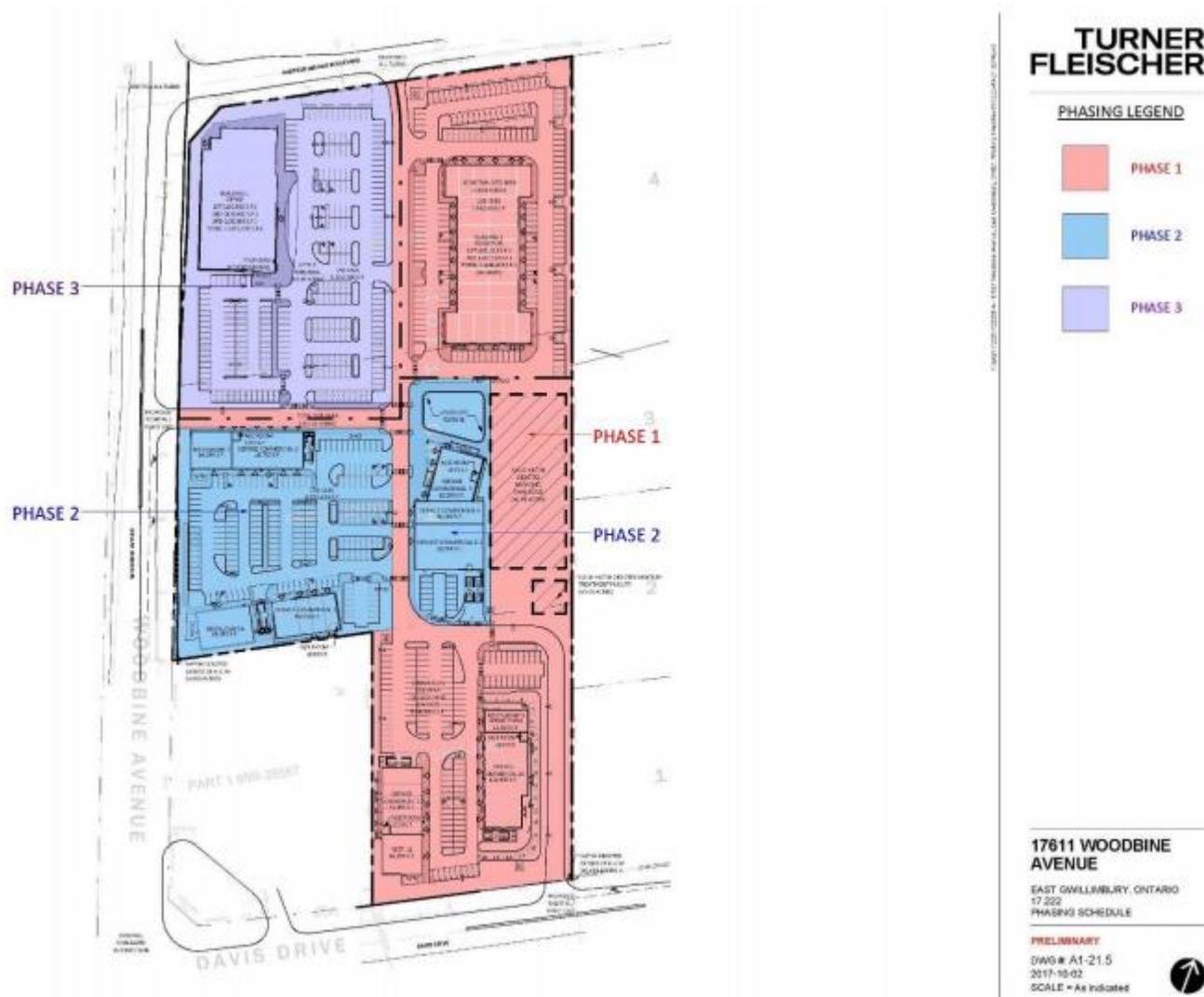
Figure 11



Source: Region of York Employment Area Profiles (2019)



Figure 12: Development Application for 17611 Woodbine Avenue



## 3.0 The Office Market

As identified in Section 2.3 of this report, East Gwillimbury does not currently have a major office market (outside of institutional offices and other PRE). The following section provides an overview of what drives commercial office investment, trends influencing office demand and investment, and considerations for how East Gwillimbury might attract major office uses looking forward. The purpose of this section is to understand if the office employment allocation to East Gwillimbury is appropriate and how East Gwillimbury can best plan for this employment through the Official Plan and other mechanisms (e.g. community improvement plans, transit planning, servicing).

### 3.1 Factors Driving Location Decision Making

Like industrial markets, office markets are comprised of both multi-tenant developers seeking to build and rent space, as well as purpose-built projects where a business constructs and occupies the building.

- Owner-occupied projects typically construct a building to fulfill the business/operation side of the business, and therefore do not consider rental rates when deciding where to build. These businesses make a capital investment to support their business and are largely concerned with capital and operating costs when deciding where to locate (e.g. land value, parking, development charges, property taxes, etc.), as

well as locating in an area with a deep pool of accessible labour.

- Multi-tenant office developers look at an investment as a form of annuity that will generate income over an extended period. These developers seek to build and rent space to tenants over the long-term. These office developers are therefore seeking locations that will attract the highest possible rents and occupancy rates. These locations are typically high profile, offering the greatest exposure and access to the widest range of possible tenants (employers/employees) and clients to help increase overall absorption levels. In these situations, the income of the building must be high enough to justify the initial capital investment, cover all operating costs, and produce a return.

The site selection priorities of businesses that require office space will naturally vary, but the fundamental preferences of prospective tenants and office developers tend to be similar. The following subsections provide a more detailed description of the key drivers of demand for office space in the Greater Toronto Area (“GTA”).

#### 3.1.1 Access to Labour and Talent

Locating in the most central locations of the GTA is a natural choice for many business establishments. This is driven by the opportunity to draw talent from a workforce of 4.7 million persons

as well as new talent from one of the many universities and colleges in the central GTA.

### **3.1.2 Agglomeration Effect**

Many businesses gain efficiencies by locating near each other given greater opportunities for networking and cross-fertilization of ideas, as well as creating a node of talented workers in similar industries. Often, retail and amenities will also locate in an area with a critical mass of employment uses, furthering the appeal of an area.

Examples of this include the financial district in downtown Toronto, Mississauga's Airport Corporate Centre, and the emerging Vaughan Metropolitan Centre.

### **3.1.3 Lifestyle Preferences and Walkable Communities**

Millennials and the next generation of employees are increasingly showing a preference for urban living as well as working and living in the same community.

As a result, office tenants are increasingly gravitating towards the densest urban centres that are part of established or emerging mixed-use communities.

### **3.1.4 Access to Transit**

Office spaces that are walkable to high-order transit (BRT, LRT, GO rail or subway, in a dedicated right-of-way) are increasingly popular amongst employers for the same reasons discussed above.

This is because multi-modal access widens the possible labour shed from which an employer can attract talent. From an employee perspective, they can work in such a location and still maintain a balanced live / work lifestyle by reducing overall commute times.

The locations that offer the fastest, most reliable, and frequent service (e.g. subway), and are nearest to Downtown Toronto and Union Station, will be in highest demand and have the highest possible rent.

With average commuting times of around 70 minutes across the GTA, improved service and sites nearest to existing or planned high-order transit will expand what is considered a reasonable commuting distance, offer an alternative to automobile dependency, and improve in attractiveness as a place of employment. However, it is important to keep in mind that there are many areas in the GTA that have and will benefit from improved transit service levels, and these areas will compete against each other to attract a share of suburban office demand.

Illustrating the above, there has been significant uplift in new office development within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC), adding approximately 460,000 square feet of new office space between 2012 and 2016 in anticipation of a new TTC subway station. Since the subway has begun operations, an additional 305,000 square feet has been delivered, in addition to a new 600,000 square foot office building (SmartCentres Phase 2) proposed adjacent to the subway station.

### 3.1.5 Access to Highways

Notwithstanding the importance of transit, most communities outside of Toronto and other dense urban environments (e.g. VMC, Markham Centre) rely on highway access for accessibility to tenants and employees. Like transit, being proximate to highways allows employers to draw employees from a wider labour shed, subject to traffic congestion and overall commute times.

While we believe that transit will continue to be a more important driver of demand looking forward as traffic congestion continues to increase, properties with strong highway access outside of the central GTA will continue to generate demand for office uses. Often, these highway adjacent properties are large and capable of accommodating significant surface parking, further improving the economics of the project (see 4.1.7 to follow).

An example of a project leveraging strong highway access and surface parking is the 363,500 square foot building constructed at the Highway 404 and Wellington Street East interchange in Aurora (Figure 13). This building is in a context similar to many of East Gwillimbury's highway adjacent employment lands, however, is closer to the central GTA labour force.

Figure 13: Office Building at 333 First Commerce Drive Aurora



### 3.1.6 Exposure and Visibility

Office and/or signage visibility to the traveling public is also an important consideration for many businesses who use their real estate as part of their marketing and branding strategy.

### 3.1.7 Surface Parking and Large Vacant Lots

Combined with access to highways, many prospective tenants still value access to affordable (ideally free) parking. Access to surface parking or other affordable parking solutions (e.g. standalone structured or integrated podium parking) can be important for businesses that rely on customer convenience, have employees who regularly travel off-site for work, and/or entertain client meetings. It is also particularly important where high-order transit is not within walking distance (500 to 800 meters or 10 minutes) or is not expansive (e.g. one-way GO Rail Station).

Office developers (both multi-tenant developers and owner-occupied buildings) will seek locations that can accommodate surface parking to reduce capital costs. Significant underground parking (often ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per space) can significantly erode the attractiveness of an investment.

### 3.1.8 Regionally Competitive Pricing

While offices located nearest to highways generally lack an amenity rich environment and other favorable market attributes, they tend to offer regionally competitive pricing. Overall, prospective tenants considering a suburban office location will be

more difficult to attract and may naturally expect to trade off walkability, and many of the other positive locational attributes identified in this section, for reduced monthly rent.

## 3.2 Historic Trends in the GTA Office Market

Prior to the 1980s, most office development occurred in Toronto's Downtown as well as select locations along the subway system and other non-transit areas adjacent major highways. This largely included major office development in Toronto's Financial District, with the establishment of Commerce Court and the TD Centre, as well as along the North Yonge Corridor. Some development was also occurring in Mississauga, and smaller scale buildings in Markham and Vaughan, but to a lesser extent.

Between the 1980s and 1990s, office development continued to occur in the most central areas, but significant office development also began to occur in suburban locations in the '905' region – due to the popularity of the suburbs as a housing option, ease of commuting by car, GO rail expansion, favourable tax rates, and worker preferences for suburban office parks at the time.

By the mid-2000s, office development yet-again shifted back to Toronto. Between 2011 and 2016, Toronto accounted for 72% of all new office space added to the GTA market. Of this, over 85%

was in Downtown Toronto<sup>3</sup>. Currently, over 90% of all office space under construction in the GTA is within downtown Toronto<sup>4</sup>.

The predominance of the Downtown Toronto office market is generally a result of this area being able to ‘tick’ the greatest number of boxes for prospective tenants – namely, proximity to talent, greater networking opportunities, amenity rich environments, cultural, recreation, entertainment opportunities, walkable residential opportunities, and access to higher order transit. Locating near Union Station, the hub of the Regional GTA transit network, also expands the labour pool to the suburbs and reduces the need for costly parking. This combination of positive attributes has generated significant market momentum as these areas are highest in demand (lowest vacancy and highest achievable rents).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Downtown Toronto was near record low availability (around 3.0%); with a vacancy of between 5.0% and 8.0% considered healthy or balanced<sup>5</sup>. In other words, supply is not keeping up with demand. Given the large amount of office space under construction and proposed within Toronto, we do not see these market conditions shifting significantly (subject to the impact of COVID-19, to be discussed to follow).

While these concentrated development patterns are concerning for many municipalities attempting to attract office investment across the GTA, it is also noted that pricing in downtown Toronto

has become very expensive. Net asking rents in Downtown Toronto have increased beyond \$60 per square foot (“psf”) for much of the higher quality space, whereas average net asking rents in the GTA are currently below \$30 psf. It is possible that some demand will shift new office development to less expensive suburban locations as business are priced out of the core. However, these locations must address the drivers of demand identified in this section to be competitive. We are therefore seeing the office market being attracted to suburban transit nodes (e.g. VMC) as well as non-downtown Toronto locations (e.g. Eglinton LRT corridor, GO Stations).

### 3.3 Office Densification

It is important to appreciate that while a small number of market areas are absorbing a sizeable proportion of overall office demand, new office buildings are developing more efficiently than ever before. This is largely due to more efficient office layouts. Employee dense co-working office space is also becoming more prominent and it is expected that telecommuting and “work from home” will continue to become more accepted. These trends are resulting in an overall lower GFA being required per worker to satisfy future employment growth. In other words, there is decreasing demand for physical office space per employee, despite growing overall employment levels. This trend is most pronounced in Downtown Toronto but also plays a role in projecting future

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<sup>3</sup> IMIT Program Review December 2017 – City of Toronto and Hemson Consulting Ltd.; City of Toronto Employment Survey 2019

<sup>4</sup> CBRE Marketview, Toronto Office, Q4 2019.

<sup>5</sup> CBRE Marketview, Toronto Office, Q1 2020.

employment growth in the suburbs. While the implication of shifting office demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has yet to play-out, and will not for some time, East Gwillimbury will compete against all other GTA municipalities to attract a share of what may be shrinking demand for office space on a per worker basis.

### **3.4 Impact of COVID-19**

The current employment context is dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The depth of impact on the regional and provincial economies is not yet fully understood but it is clear even now that certain industries will suffer long-term impacts. Most experts agree that the GTA economy, due to its highly diversified nature, will be the most resistant to negative impacts and the first to recover, but the timing of a full recovery is not known.

While employment conditions in 2020-21 will inherently be challenged as a result of COVID-19, it is expected that FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate), manufacturing, innovation and technology, warehousing and distribution sectors, as well as support services, are more likely to recover in a shorter period of time relative to other industries. The rebounding of August 2020 employment numbers supports this notion. This is particularly expected relative to a prolonged recovery period for businesses engaged in hospitality, travel, and retail-trades. However, one significant external factor impacting the overall trajectory of economic growth will be the Ontario's trade ties to the United States, and uncertainty with respect to their handling of the crisis

and the associated economic recovery. This factor alone could impact the timing of a return to a new economic 'normal' across all sectors.

As a result of the above conditions (e.g. job loss, business instability, trade uncertainty), shorter-term demand for office space across the region may stall, resulting in higher vacancies and reduced office investment interest over the short-term.

We also expect that COVID-19 could result in some permanent changes to the nature of work. This likely will involve increased working from home and telecommuting, which would reduce demand for physical office space moving forward. While this trend has been occurring over the past ten years, the experience of COVID-19 is likely to accelerate it.

On the other hand, some economists predict that COVID-19 might increase demand for office space as companies seek to create more 'flex' satellite offices in suburban areas to reduce long periods of exposure on transit and the time lost to commuting that employees currently enjoy while working from home, as well as the creation of less dense office environments to assist with social distancing.

### **3.5 Implications for East Gwillimbury Land Needs and Official Plan Policies**

The analysis and discussion in this section illustrates why, at least partially, East Gwillimbury has not generated any major office investment. Office investment has heavily concentrated in the

most central areas of the GTA, specifically downtown Toronto. Other strong suburban office nodes (e.g. Mississauga Airport Corporate Centre and Meadowvale, the Markham/Richmond Hill node near Highway 404/407) as well as emerging office nodes (e.g. VMC, Markham Centre) have also begun to capture a significant amount of office investment due to a combination of new transit, mixed-use master plans, incentives, and being able to address many of the drivers of demand highlighted at the start of this section. The trend of concentrated development patterns in strong urban market areas is likely to continue.

East Gwillimbury is therefore likely to see modest investment in major office looking forward. As will be assessed in the following sections, East Gwillimbury's market is much better positioned to attract a wide variety of ELE and PRE, rather than MOE. Notwithstanding this, it is likely that over the next 30 years the Town will attract some level of interest for MOE. As such, we view the Region's allocation of 500 MOE jobs to East Gwillimbury as being reasonable. This might equate to approximately 150,000 square feet of office gross floor area, assuming a ratio of one job per 300 square feet. This investment would likely come through several modest buildings, rather than one or two larger projects. If the market for MOE shifts looking forward, a higher allocation of MOE will be necessary through future Land Needs Assessments.

To maximize the potential for MOE, East Gwillimbury should plan for this investment in three ways:

- Adjacent the East Gwillimbury GO Station to leverage the transit infrastructure and future transit improvements through GO expansion;
- Within a mixed-use context along Green Lane, or other strategic nodes identified as the Official Plan Review advances; and/or
- Within existing/future Employment Areas.

We believe that the best opportunity lies within the vacant Queensville and ROPA 1 EA, as well as the remaining lands within the Green Lane EA. These lands will have strong accessibility / visibility from Highway 404, have large parcels capable of accommodating mid-rise buildings with surface parking, can offer a more cost-effective investment opportunity relative to other GTA municipalities, and have the potential to be master planned from a vacant/greenfield condition. These areas should be planned to accommodate a wide range of uses, however, an emphasis should be placed on 'prestige' employment uses, like the Town's current Prestige Employment Area designation. The presence of heavy industrial uses with outdoor storage will not create a positive market environment for new office investment.

This strategy has worked well in Brampton's Bram West neighbourhood, where the City's employment policies are targeting prestige employment uses such as industrial uses that are wholly contained within a modern building as well as office buildings. The policies also place an emphasis on designing modern, clean, and attractive industrial uses that leverage the

strong nearby highway access. Investment in Bram West has included large warehouse and logistics facilities, such as a new Amazon fulfillment centre, as well as new multi-tenant industrial buildings and some modest office investment. Similar to East Gwillimbury, Brampton experiences very little MOE, however the Bram West area has successfully experienced investment in industrial and modest office buildings from Amazon, Air Canada, Loblaws, Canon, and many others.

While Brampton's employment areas do not address many of the demand drivers discussed in this section (e.g. transit, mixed-use, walkable, amenity rich), we believe that East Gwillimbury will be challenged to compete with the most urban market areas in York Region and elsewhere in the GTA. Rather, planning for some office investment through cost effective development in the Town's emerging EA's are likely to be the most attractive to investors.

Allowing for office investment within mixed-use areas around transit (i.e. GO Station) and intensification areas will also allow modestly scaled office investment to move forward over time in strategic locations. Depending on the direction of the Official Plan review, incentives through a Community Improvement Plan could also be considered to improve market conditions as well as solving servicing challenges to the employment areas.

## 4.0 The Employment Land Market

The following section assesses the employment land market in York Region and East Gwillimbury. The analysis provides an overview of what drives investment in ELE, trends influencing ELE demand and investment, types of ELE East Gwillimbury should expect and the associated density of this investment, and considerations for how the Town should plan for these uses looking forward.

### 4.1 Factors Driving Location Decision Making

The type of sectors to locate in EAs across the GTA vary widely, but generally include a range of heavy and light industrial, manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, self-storage, outdoor storage, industrial services (e.g. auto repair), ancillary office and commercial space, commercial and retail uses, and other similar functions. Some EAs also accommodate higher intensity / employment dense uses such as stand-alone office buildings, professional services seeking cost effective workplace solutions, the technology sector, creative uses, and many others.

As discussed in the previous section of this report, while some office investment is likely to occur in EAs, the majority of this investment will be drawn to high-density and mixed-use environments supported by transit, a deep labour pool, a vibrant and amenity rich environment, and other similar attributes. It is likely that the technology sector and other higher intensity employment uses are gravitating to similar environments.

The factors that influence the development of industrial properties, either purpose-built / pre-leased space for a specific tenant or the construction of speculative space, can be varied and complex. However, the following factors have the greatest influence.

- Location: proximity to markets and suppliers, transportation links, prestige and character of the site, 400 series highway exposure.
- Property Characteristics: Property size, accessibility from major roads and highways, grading, servicing.
- Land Use Compatibility: Conflicts with sensitive land uses that might impact the use of a property for industrial functions (e.g. residential, retail).
- Long Term Operating Environment: Rent, taxes, utilities, and labour.
- Development Costs: Development charges, land value.

A product of lower job density and increasing reliance on automation, access to labour has become less important over time in making locational decisions for the industrial market. As a result, industrial developers are often the first to move to the edge or outside of a major urban centre if these areas have both positive locational attributes and lower land values. For this reason, Milton,

Halton Hills, and Waterloo Region have grown over the past 15 years to be major competitors to traditional central GTA employment land markets.

## 4.2 York Region ELE Market

### 4.2.1 Macro Overview

The GTA is one of the largest industrial markets in North America with approximately 794.3 million square feet of space, which grew by 41.1 million square feet between Q1 2015 and Q3 2020<sup>6</sup>. Of this, Toronto North, which includes all of York Region, accommodates roughly 17% of this supply.

As noted by Table 3, the key market indicators of the Toronto North Market are all positive. Between 2015 and 2020, the size of the industrial inventory has increased by over 7% and nearly 9.6 million square feet. Over this time, the average net asking rent for industrial space has nearly doubled, the price of industrial land has increased significantly, the availability rate has decreased, and the amount of industrial space under construction has doubled. While the vacancy rate has modestly increased, it is noted that immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic, the vacancy rate was at an all-time low of 1.2%. The current vacancy rate of 2.4%, while higher than the rate in 2015, is still well below balanced market conditions.

Avison Young notes that the COVID-19 pandemic stalled investment across the GTA through the first two quarters. Despite this stall, industrial markets are performing well, especially demand for space driven by warehousing and supply chain / logistics facilities. It is expected that construction stalled due to the pandemic will begin to move forward over the next year as market conditions continue to favour the delivery of new industrial supply<sup>7</sup>. Notwithstanding this, the pandemic has placed increased pressure for large warehouse and logistics facilities due to increased e-commerce activity. Avison Young further notes that York Region continues to be one of the strongest industrial markets in the GTA, with activity in the City of Vaughan continuing to positively impact the market indicators noted in Table 3.

Table 3

Toronto North (York Region) Industrial Inventory Statistics						
	Inventory	Vacancy	Availability	Under Construction	Avg. Net Asking Rent	Avg. New Asking Sale Price
Q3 2020 (COVID-19 Impact)	135,558,925	2.4%	1.4%	1,191,670	\$11.3	\$270
Q4 2019	134,049,564	1.2%	0.6%	1,862,346	\$10.9	\$296
Q1 2015	125,991,064	1.9%	5.0%	623,279	\$6	\$106
<b>Change (2015 - 2020)</b>	<b>9,567,861</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>-3.6%</b>	<b>568,391</b>	<b>\$6</b>	<b>\$165</b>

Source: CBRE Industrial Marketview Toronto

### 4.2.2 York Region's Analysis from the MCR

York Region estimates that the Regional EAs accommodate roughly 53% of all jobs in the municipality and have accommodated approximately 55% of all surveyed employment growth between 2008 and 2018<sup>8</sup>. York Region also identifies that the Region's EAs

<sup>6</sup> CBRE Marketview – Toronto Industrial

<sup>7</sup> Avison Young Q2 2020 Industrial Market Report

<sup>8</sup> Employment Background Report to the Regional MCR (2019)

accommodate approximately 79% of the Region's Major Office Jobs and that the Regional EAs are increasingly accommodating more service producing jobs rather than good producing.

York Region has also found that while employment growth has remained strong, the absorption of employment land has been decreasing over the past ten years. Rather, job growth has been occurring in vacant buildings (due to the 2008 recession) and intensification in existing EAs. As a result, the average density across the Region's EAs (excluding major office in these areas) has increased from 55 jobs per hectare in 2013 to 58 jobs per hectare in 2018. York Region estimates that approximately 60% of the ELE has been accommodated through intensification rather than vacant land development.

Finally, York Region identifies that more mixed-use development with higher overall densities are occurring Region-wide. However, there has also been an increase in land intensive warehouses and other industrial functions, particularly in West Vaughan, where employment densities can be well below 30 jobs per hectare. CBRE further notes several large warehousing and logistics facilities in Vaughan that are expected to come on-line soon.

York Region therefore appears to be successful at accommodating both smaller scale industrial investment as well as large industrial buildings on large parcels of land that have been typical of recent large warehouse and supply chain investment. Some EAs in York region are also successfully attracting major office investment.

Overall, York Region's EAs are healthy and appear to be strong magnets for future employment growth looking forward.

### 4.3 The ELE Market Looking Forward

Overall, there has been a long-term shift in employment trends as North America continues to move towards a service economy from a manufacturing economy. This trend has resulted in the loss of manufacturing and other industrial employment and the rapid growth in professional office, service, and retail employment. While employment levels in manufacturing and industrial uses have decreased, demand for space appears to be increasing. Specifically, there has been significant growth observed in distribution and warehousing activities (correlating with the rise in online shopping, just in time delivery, and demand for food storage and refrigeration) as well as self-storage facilities in the GTA (correlating with the shift to higher density living and a lack of storage space in the home).

Further, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated many of these trends throughout 2020 as online shopping has seen a substantial surge. It is not unreasonable to predict that this significant shift in consumer behaviour is here to stay, which will only further grow the need for distribution and warehousing activities.

In their report "Planning the Next Greater Golden Horseshoe", The Neptis Foundation explores how the changing economic landscape will affect employment investment and employment lands in the

Greater Golden Horseshoe (“GGH”) looking forward<sup>9</sup>. Key findings from this study include:

- The GGH has lost approximately 130,000 manufacturing jobs and gained 47,000 finance jobs between 2006 and 2016.
  - Trends and economic theory indicate we are entering a fourth industrial revolution centred on advanced technologies, which is driving employment in high-skilled areas. In addition to the above, globalization is driving the loss of traditional manufacturing/industrial employment as lower-skilled work is outsourced.
  - Looking forward, technological innovation, especially automation, is expected to have major disruptive impacts on employment in specific industries. The report notes that the most significant job losses between 2001 and 2014 have been from machine operators, assemblers, machinists, as well as clerical employees. York Region has also assessed the potential impact of automation on their employment market.
  - It is also important to note that automation has the potential to disrupt other industries, the impact of which is already being observed (e.g. robo-financial advisors, hotel industry, taxi drivers, clerical workers, accountants, basic legal assistance and contracts, etc.).
- Employment sectors most vulnerable to automation include accommodation and food services, manufacturing, agriculture, transportation and warehousing. Whereas sectors least vulnerable to automation include education services, professional, scientific, technical services, and health care and social assistance.
  - Professional and knowledge-based employment will continue to drive economic growth in the GGH, and these uses are increasingly concentrating in very few locations, with downtown Toronto accommodating the vast majority of this growth (as will be explored in the following section of this report). While agglomeration economics is not a new concept, it is becoming more pronounced as the GGH economy continues to shift towards knowledge-based employment.
  - While technological and global economic change will have negative consequences on certain sectors, it is almost certain to create new jobs and employment in other sectors or create new industries entirely. Understanding the requirements of these new sectors, relative to the requirements of sectors in decline, is an important consideration looking forward. Overall, the study offers the following considerations:
    - Despite falling employment levels in certain industrial sectors, this may not correspond directly with a decrease in demand for floor space. Rather, technological

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<sup>9</sup> The Neptis Foundation (November 2018): Planning the Next GGH

innovation and automation may reduce the number of employees that are necessary, but not the space or economic function itself. This is likely true for industries such as logistics, storage, and manufacturing.

- The previous bullet is a critical point of discussion, as cities must plan for enough space to accommodate these employment uses while at the same time understanding that they are likely to accommodate low employment levels on site.
- Logistics related employment experienced growth of 7,400 jobs (30% increase) between 2006 and 2016 in the GGH. These uses are primarily attracted to intermodal facilities, highways, and particularly airports. This sector tends to concentrate heavily around the Pearson International Airport as well as along the major highway network. This sector is supported by the growth in e-commerce as well as the general need for warehouse, distribution, and truck terminal space in the economy.
- Logistics employment tends to consist of very large facilities in the “905” region and smaller facilities in more urban areas to satisfy the timely delivery of goods. Overall, automation is expected to erode employment in these facilities, but not the need for the facilities themselves. Given low employment density and truck traffic, the appropriate way to plan for these uses is an important planning consideration.

- Manufacturing employment has decreased steadily over the long-term and despite recent stability is likely to continue to decrease looking forward due to technological innovation, globalization, free markets, supply chains, access to foreign labour, and other factors.
- Despite the above, it is possible that automated and advanced production and manufacturing activities may require highly skilled workers looking forward, which may change the locational habits of these industries towards more urban locations.

#### 4.4 East Gwillimbury ELE Market

East Gwillimbury is at an interesting point in its development history as it continues to urbanize. As noted in Section 3.1 of this report, East Gwillimbury’s employment growth has been concentrated within the construction and transportation / warehousing sectors, which account for 47% of all employment growth in the Town. Outside of investment by York Region in the public administration sector (e.g. Region of York offices in the Bales EA), it is likely that these two sectors combine for the vast majority of employment growth in the Town’s EAs, with some retail and wholesale investment also occurring.

The Town has limited data available to illustrate the type of ELE investment that has been occurring, however Table 4 illustrates the breakout of building permits issued by category. Over 30% of all permits were for industrial occupancies, with retail and business/personal services also making up a sizeable proportion.

Table 4

East Gwillimbury Non-Residential Building Permits by Category						
	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	Total
Assembly Occupancies	7	26	23	16	16	98
Business and Personal Services	3	3	8	7	10	45
Industrial Occupancies	17	13	19	22	14	99
Mercantile Occupancies	14	19	13	5	4	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>304</b>

Source: Town of East Gwillimbury

East Gwillimbury is also in an enviable position in the GTHA as they have approximately 270 net hectares (670 acres) of vacant employment land that is immediately adjacent the Highway 404. Further, a new highway is proposed at the north end of the Town that will connect Highway 404 with Highway 400 to the west (Figure 14) on the following page. As illustrated by Figure 14, a significant amount of employment land is also proposed to be included adjacent this new highway in the future.

The availability of such a large swath of vacant employment land adjacent to this highway system should attract a wide variety of ELE once servicing issues are solved. The future Highway 404-400 connecting link will further enhance the accessibility of these lands and their attractiveness for ELE employment. As such, we view these lands as having high potential to attract a wide variety of ELE ranging from industrial, transportation, warehousing, construction, self-storage, infrastructure, public administration, and some office development. Where appropriate, we could also envision retail and creative/technology sectors investing in these lands over the long-term.

Investment will be attracted to these employment areas because of the strong highway access and lack of highway adjacent

employment land in the GTHA, the value proposition that East Gwillimbury offers relative to more central locations, the large supply and variety of available vacant lands, strong land use policy and separation from sensitive uses, and immediate access to the future Highway 404-400 connecting link. As highway adjacent employment land in the central GTA continues to be exhausted and increase in price, lands such as East Gwillimbury's EAs should only grow in popularity over the long-term.

#### 4.5 Expected ELE Typologies and Densities

Table 5 (page 35) illustrates the current employment density per net hectare for East Gwillimbury's existing and future EAs as well as the density assumptions for the remaining vacant lands in these areas as identified by York Region. These numbers were also assessed in Section 3 of this report.

Overall, the Holland Landing, Mount Albert, and Bales Drive EA are all proposed to build-out at a similar density to existing conditions. This is a reasonable assumption, especially given the lower densities assumed for these areas. Both the Holland Landing and Mount Albert EA are less strategically located relative to the Town's other EAs and are likely to continue to develop with uses similar to current conditions. While the new development proposed for the Bales EA is likely to increase the current employment density, the continued use of the eastern portion of this EA for industrial uses with outdoor storage is likely to offset this increase. These three EAs are also largely developed, meaning the impact of changing the assumed density targets are modest.

Figure 14

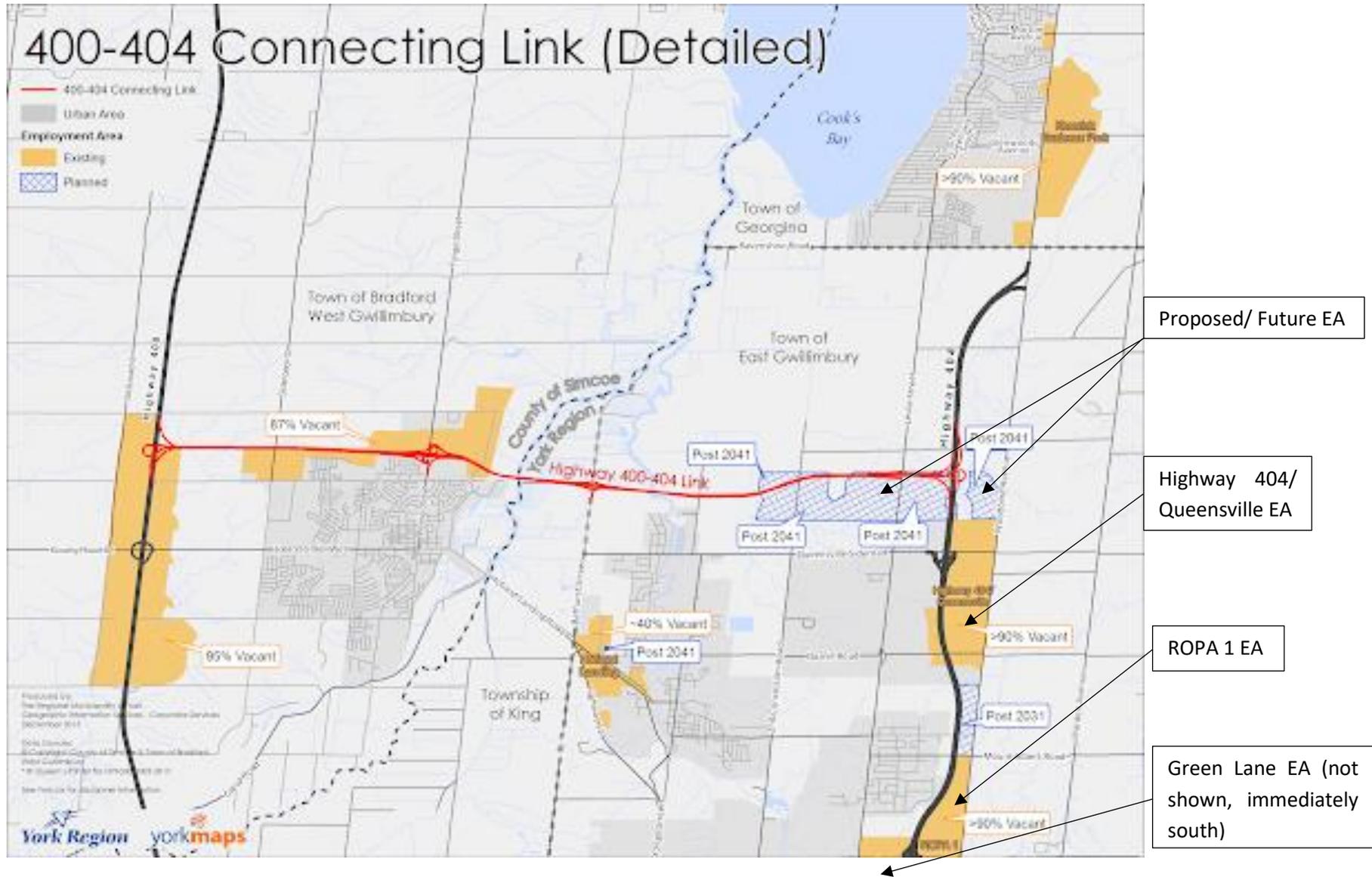


Table 5

Employment Land Density Assumptions, East Gwillimbury		
Employment Area	Current Density	Assumed Density for Vacant Lands
Holland Landing	18	20
Mount Albert	27	25
Bales Drive	29	30
Green Lane	45	50
Highway 404/Queensville	-	50
ROPA 1	-	50

Source: York Region MCR Assumptions

The Green Lane, Highway 404/Queensville and ROPA 1 EAs represent over 270 net hectares of vacant employment land. These lands are likely to accommodate the vast majority of the Town’s new employment looking forward and are largely vacant as of the writing of this report. The Region is assuming a density of 50 jobs per net hectare for these lands, which is significantly higher than the density of the Town’s existing EAs. As noted in Section 3 of this report, the 45 jobs per hectare noted in the Green Lane EA is primarily due to one business that employs an extraordinarily high number of employees with shift work (Dynamic Suspension).

Looking forward, it is likely that these three EAs begin to see a mix of ELE. This is likely to include large warehouse and distribution facilities, such as those in West Vaughan that accommodate densities as low as 5-10 jobs per hectare, as well as higher employment uses such as the Dynamic Suspension business noted above, the development proposal highlighted in the Bales EA, and

the densities observed along the Highway 404 corridor in other York Region municipalities.

The employment density observed in York Region’s other Highway 404 EAs include (Figure 15):

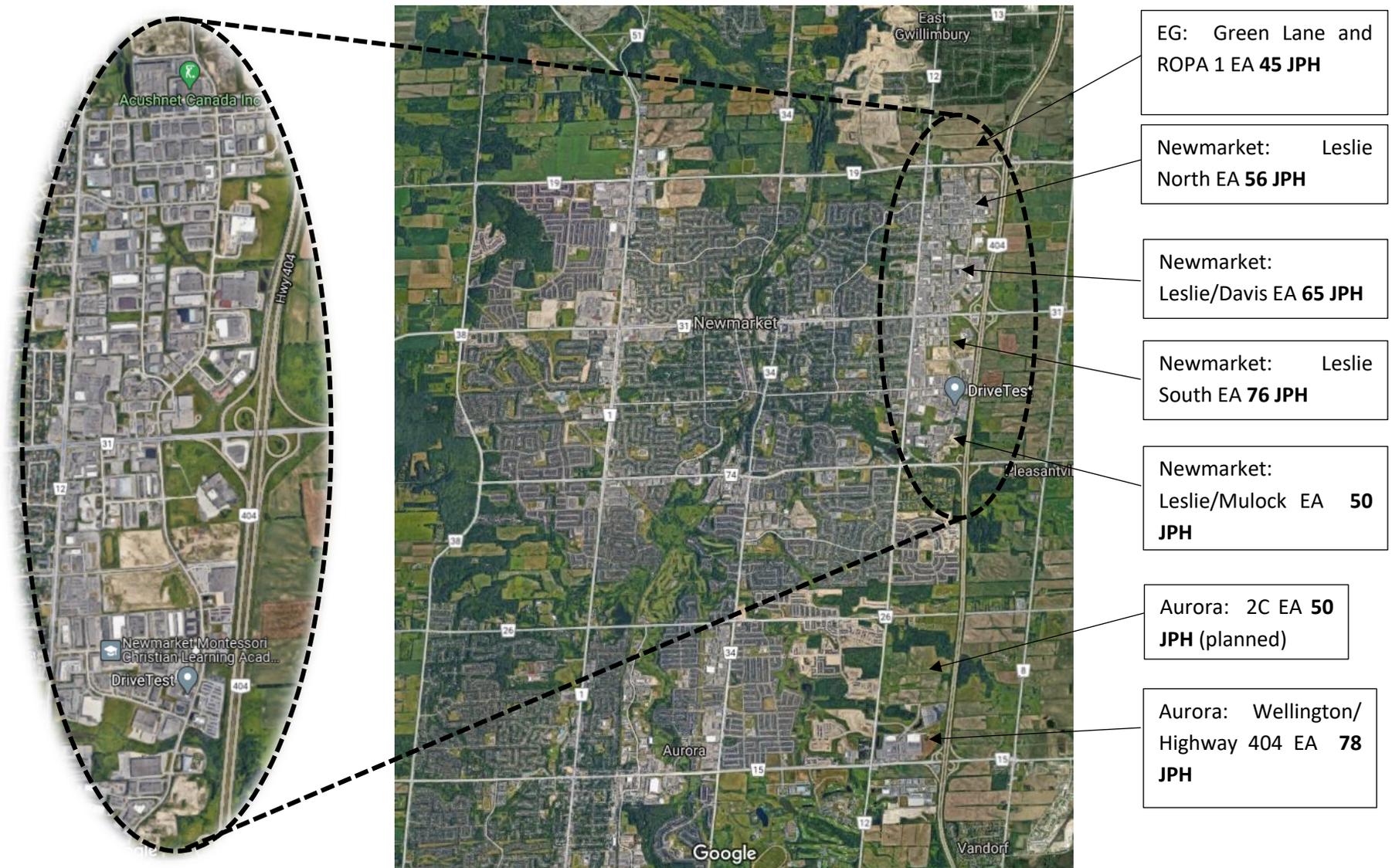
- Newmarket Leslie North EA: **56 jobs per hectare** and is made up of multi-unit industrial buildings with industrial and ancillary office uses primarily in the manufacturing and wholesale trade sectors. This EA is immediately south of the Green Lane and ROPA 1 EA.
- Newmarket Leslie/Davis EA: **65 jobs per hectare** and is largely dominated by manufacturing and goods producing/movement sector.
- Newmarket Leslie South EA: **76 jobs per hectare**, however employment is highly diverse including major office, education, health care, and other non-industrial employment.
- Newmarket Leslie/Mulock EA: **50 jobs per hectare** and is largely dominated by services rather than goods producing industries.
- Aurora 2C EA: Currently vacant but planned to accommodate **50 jobs per hectare**.
- Aurora Wellington/Highway 404 EA: **78 jobs per hectare**, however nearly 40% of all employment in the EA is major office (York Region, State Farm / Desjardins – **Figure 13**).

Overall, we believe that East Gwillimbury's vacant EAs, including the proposed lands from Figure 14, are positioned to capture a wide range of possible ELE typologies. It is likely that these lands will capture large warehouses and distribution facilities given their highway access, value proposition, and limited supply of large vacant properties with similar characteristics in more central locations. These large facilities with relatively low employment densities are commonplace in the current industrial market, especially for large swaths of vacant highway adjacent land.

However, it is also likely that these areas all capture more compact industrial development like what is observed in the Green Lane EA and other areas of York Region along Highway 404.

Given the above, the vacant employment lands in East Gwillimbury are likely to attract a variety of employment uses that include **densities in the range of 35 to 55 jobs per net hectare**. This range considers that a mix of ELE is likely to gravitate to these areas, which will include a mix of both space extensive and low-employment uses, some office uses, retail and commercial services, and typical industrial functions. This range of employment uses should ensure that **the Region's forecast of 45 jobs per net hectare for employment land in the DGA and 40 jobs per net hectare in the Whitebelt are reasonable targets**.

Figure 15: Employment Density Along the Upper York Region Highway 404 Corridor and Current Jobs per Hectare (JPH)



## 4.6 Implications for Land Needs and Official Plan Policies

The analysis and discussion in this section illustrates that East Gwillimbury's EAs are healthy and likely to experience demand for a wide variety of ELE including industrial, warehousing / logistics, construction, services, some major office and PRE, and other similar uses. The existing vacant employment land adjacent Highway 404 offers both the Town and the Region a strong opportunity to leverage significant employment investment moving forward. The future EA along the future Highway 404/ 400 connection are also likely to be highly in demand over the long-term for similar reasons noted in this section.

Overall, policies in the Official Plan should be flexible to allow for a wide range of ELE, however attention must be paid to the outcomes envisioned for the area. For example, large outdoor industrial storage and heavy industrial can negatively affect an area's desirability for higher intensity employment uses. A vision for each EA must be developed to ensure the vision and policy framework match market and economic realities and demand characteristics. Two or more employment land designations should therefore be created as the Official Plan review continues to account for these nuances. Considerations will include:

- Heavy industry and outdoor storage;
- Location for retail and services, including maximum caps and thresholds where appropriate;

- Strong policy language to protect EAs from sensitive land uses and conversions;
- Solving servicing and other challenges to create development ready lands;
- Flexible policy approach to allow for a variety of outcomes over the long-term; and
- Consultation with landowners and industry stakeholders through the Official Plan review.

As will be assessed at the end of this report, the Town hopes to unlock all the Whitebelt lands for long-term planning purposes. This could be achieved through the following avenues:

- Lower employment density for the vacant employment lands, which would require more land to accommodate the projected employment growth; and/or
- Higher projected employment growth.

As discussed in this section of the report, we believe the employment densities assumed for the EAs are generally reasonable for long-term planning purposes, however we recommend a modest adjust from 50 jobs per net hectare to 45. As such, the Region will likely need to allocate additional employment growth (or population, assessed by NBLC under separate cover) to achieve this outcome. This is challenging because York Region must allocate the total population and employment forecast determined for the Region by the Growth

Plan. Any addition to East Gwillimbury will require subtraction from another local municipality.

Notwithstanding the above, York Region is currently preparing additional analysis to allocate new projections to each local municipality to 2051, whereas the current projections stop at 2041. This provides an opportunity for the Region to consider allocating additional ELE to the Town.

## 5.0 Population Related Employment Market

In contribution to the East Gwillimbury Land Needs Assessment Background Study, urbanMetrics has reviewed the population-related employment (PRE) market in the Town of East Gwillimbury. The analysis provides an overview of the existing PRE market in the Region and Town, an assessment of the projected PRE employment forecast, future trends impacting the retail industry, and consideration for how the Town should plan for these uses looking forward.

### 5.1 Defining Population Related Employment

Population-related employment (PRE) is employment that primarily serves a resident population and generally grows in line with population growth. In some cases, such as tourism centres and regional service centres, PRE can be supported by non-local populations. This category of employment is generally diverse with a wide range of location requirements; however, it mirrors the geographic distribution of residential populations.

PRE is comprised of many sectors and types of work and can vary greatly based on a municipality's local economy. A significant share of PRE is institutional in nature, which includes healthcare, schools, and government services. These sectors tend to locate in clusters that are well served by transportation infrastructure and in proximity to population areas. For some municipalities, like East Gwillimbury, where a number of regional government services are located, the proportion of PRE will be higher. The remaining PRE

growth is primarily retail, food services, and other personal services that typically locate within residential communities or on commercial lands. A share of PRE also occurs within employment lands, either as ancillary to local businesses (e.g. restaurants, hotels, and banks), or because of its need for expansive low cost land parcels (e.g. municipal works depots, banquet halls, automotive sales and repair facilities).

Work at home employment, a rapidly growing employment type – particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, is also generally captured in this category. Similar to PRE as a whole, home-based employment is anticipated to generally increase in proportion to population growth.

One last characteristic that affects PRE rates is the presence of a significant tourism industry. The majority of tourism-related businesses are considered PRE, including accommodation, arts and culture, and recreation. Municipalities with substantial tourism populations and major attractions such as a casino or outdoor recreation opportunities will have a disproportionately higher ratio of PRE to population than would be typically expected.

### 5.2 Factors Driving Location Decision Making

PRE sectors are wide-ranging and flexible uses that tend to locate in places that directly serve communities and local workforces. Similar to office development, the site selection criteria of PRE

businesses are varied, however there are some essential factors that drive decision making.

The following section provides a more detailed description of the key drivers for retail/service commercial and institutional space in the GTA.

### **5.2.1 Proximity to Population Areas**

PRE sectors (including retail, schools, services, and commercial) are generally attracted to locations convenient to residents. As discussed previously, as the population grows, the demand for PRE also increases to service the needs of the local community.

The PRE market across York Region is immense and offers countless analogous options to consumers. As such, it is logical that individuals are more likely to choose a service such as a dentist or a hair salon based on its proximity to their home or workplace.

Additionally, millennials and young families are increasingly showing a preference for walkable communities and more urban living. By locating within or adjacent to population areas, PRE sectors contribute to the urban fabric of a diverse, mixed use community that can be easily accessed by walking, cycling, transit, or driving.

### **5.2.2 Cross-Shopping Opportunities**

Like office development, PRE businesses and institutions gain efficiencies by locating near each other.

A local example of this includes the regional commercial node at the intersection of Yonge Street and Green Lane in East Gwillimbury. Commercial developers and tenants continue to locate in this area as it has an existing regional market draw and presents an opportunity for shoppers to make multiple, simplified trips across different stores without having to get in their vehicle.

It is also common for institutional uses to locate near each other as it generates greater opportunities for networking and industry collaboration. The strongest example of this in the GTA is the hospital district in Downtown Toronto which is directly adjacent to the University of Toronto. This node is complemented by the various healthcare services and restaurants that have located in the area. On a smaller scale, many schools in York and other regions are co-locating with municipal uses, such as community centres, libraries, and sports fields.

It has been demonstrated that employees and visitors of institutional uses, such as hospitals, make some of their expenditures closer to the institution than their place of residence. This suggests that institutional uses also influence the location of commercial activities.

### **5.2.3 Access and Visibility from Arterial Roadways**

Exposure and visibility from arterial roadways are important considerations for many PRE businesses. More visibility begets more potential customers or users. For many retail/service commercial sectors, the better visibility your business has, the less advertising is required.

Many employees and consumers rely on major arterial roadways and/or 400 series highways to access PRE businesses. Locating in areas with close proximity and direct access to arterial roadways allow businesses to draw from a wider labour shed and market area.

#### **5.2.4 Access to Transit**

All PRE sectors – ranging from retail stores to universities – generally benefit when they are near high-order transit (BRT, LRT, GO rail or subway, in a dedicated right-of-way).

The rise of e-commerce may have reduced the need for consumers to make multiple trips, however, transit hubs have nearly guaranteed foot traffic. Transit users represent a captive and regular audience that have time to browse retail stores and complete errands while they wait. Further, by locating near a transit station, employers have access to a broader labour shed from which they can attract staff.

Other institutional PRE users, including schools and healthcare services, benefit from multi-modal access as it increases the accessibility of their services to a wider range of individuals, including young people, lower income families, and seniors who no longer drive.

#### **5.2.5 Appropriate Land Area**

PRE businesses require sites that can accommodate their desired floor plates, as well as the required number of parking spaces and

circulation space stipulated within local zoning policy. Particularly in suburban markets where the majority of people drive, such as East Gwillimbury, PRE businesses must ensure they have adequate access to surface or affordable parking solutions to safeguard customer convenience. Although this will vary greatly by use and location.

### **5.3 York Region's PRE Market**

#### **5.3.1 York Region's Analysis from the MCR**

As part of York Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review process, the *Planning for Employment* Background Report was prepared in May 2019 to provide background analysis and support the development of the Region's Employment Strategy.

In summary, York Region concludes that PRE continues to see consistent and steady growth over the past decade. York Region also notes that PRE growth shares grew at a similar pace to employment growth overall, growing by 31% and 32%, respectively.

Table 6 outlines York Region's PRE ratios in 2008 and 2018. This ratio is measured by dividing population by PRE jobs, and provides an indicator of the number of PRE jobs that are required to meet the needs of a growing population. These are ratios of residents to jobs, and so, a ratio of 5.0 translates to 5.0 residents for each PRE job. The lower the ratio, the more PRE jobs in the community.

Table 6

York Region PRE Ratios, 2008 & 2018	
	PRE Ratio (residents/PRE job)
2008	5.2
2018	4.7

*Source: York Region "Planning for Employment" Background Report, May 2019*

As shown, York Region has found that the ratio of population to PRE has gradually decreased between 2008 and 2018. This can be due to several factors, including achieving population milestones that support specific services and the extended reach the Region is gaining in the GTA. Attractions such as Vaughan Mills Shopping Centre, Canada’s Wonderland, Seneca College, three major hospitals and a fourth recently added in Vaughan all contribute to the need for more population related employment.

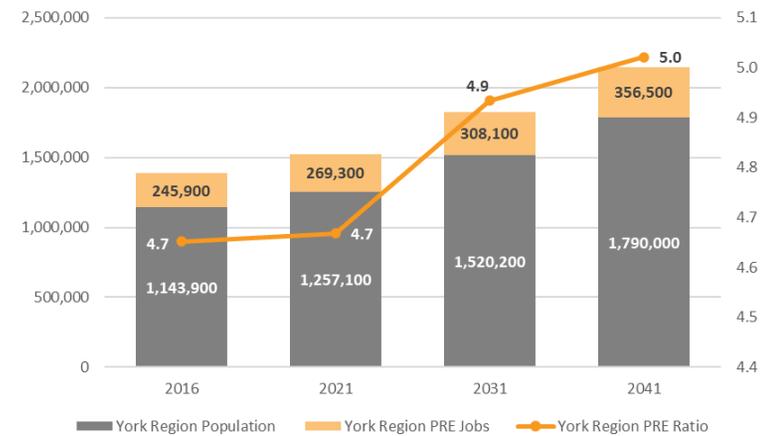
### 5.3.2 York Region PRE Market: Looking Forward

York Region has prepared population and employment forecasts by five-year increments to 2041. While the 2051 population and employment minimum target has been identified for York Region in Schedule 3, the total value has not yet been allocated among the lower-tier municipalities.

Figure 16 illustrates the anticipated relationship between York Region’s forecast total population and the forecast number of PRE jobs. As shown, York Region is anticipated to add just over 110,000 new PRE jobs to support the 646,000 new residents by 2041. Many

of these new PRE jobs are expected to locate within the Region’s residential communities and evolving mixed-use areas and corridors.

Figure 16: Population to PRE Job Comparison, York Region



Source: urbanMetrics inc., based on the 2019 York Region Population Forecasts.

By 2041, the ratio of PRE jobs to residents is estimated to gradually increase to 5.0. However, as a share of total employment, PRE will remain consistent at approximately 40% to 2041. The remaining workforce would be comprised of employment land employment, major office employment and rural employment.

### 5.4 East Gwillimbury’s PRE Market

It can be difficult to define and analyze each employment category by NAICS code due to the wide-ranging nature of sectors. For instance, as noted in the previous Growth Plan Land Needs

Assessment methodology, financial services employment could include a retail bank (population-related employment), corporate financial services (office employment), data centre (employment land employment), or an independent insurance agent (rural employment). However, for the purposes of this analysis, we have categorized the following NAICS codes as PRE:

- 44-45: Retail Trade;
- 61: Education Services;
- 62: Health Care/Social Assistance;
- 71: Arts, Entertainment, Recreation;
- 72: Accommodation and Food Services;
- 81: Other Services; and
- 91: Public Administration.

#### 5.4.1 Historic Trends in PRE

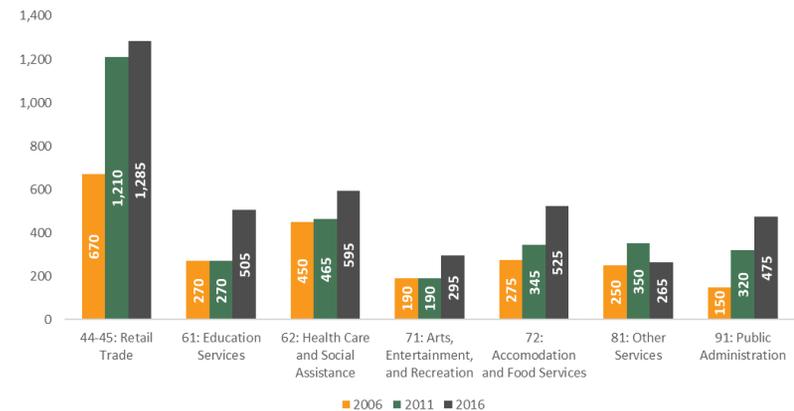
East Gwillimbury is characterized as a predominantly suburban / rural municipality, however, it maintains a robust PRE sector. Retail trade is East Gwillimbury’s top employment sector, accounting for 16% of total jobs. Further, all major growth sectors contributing to recent job creation in East Gwillimbury are considered PRE sectors, which include education, health care/social assistance, accommodation/food services, and public administration.

Based on Statistics Canada Place of Work data, there were just under 4,000 PRE jobs in East Gwillimbury in 2016. This represented

an increase of some 1,700 PRE jobs since 2006. It is important to note that this total differs from the York Region employment forecasts prepared in 2019 which estimates that East Gwillimbury had 4,400 PRE jobs in 2016. This is likely due to the inclusion of jobs with no fixed place of work in the York Region forecasts, of which a portion would be PRE<sup>10</sup>.

Figure 17 outlines the change in PRE jobs between the 2006 and 2016 Census, as reported by Place of Work data. Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, and Public Administration saw the most aggressive annual growth rates in job creation, amounting to 9.2%, 9.1%, and 21.7%, respectively.

Figure 17: Total PRE Jobs in East Gwillimbury by NAICS Code, 2006-2016



Source: urbanMetrics inc. based on the 2006, 2011, and 2016 Census of Canada.

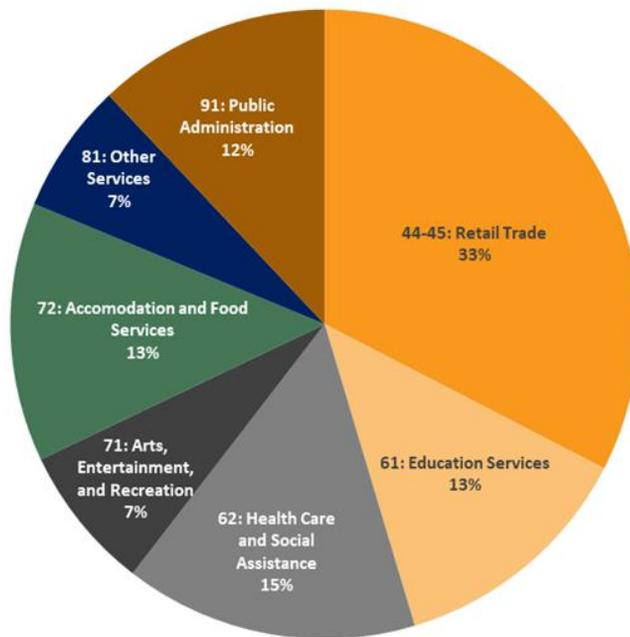
<sup>10</sup> Growth Plan employment estimates use a formula to allocate employment with no fixed place of work to specific municipalities. PRE jobs which may have no fixed place of work include, domestic workers,

gardeners, private repair persons, some gig economy workers, etc, who do not report to a specific address or location on a regular basis.

While the Public Administration sector does not account for a large proportion of total PRE jobs, it more than tripled its number of jobs between 2006 and 2016. This growth is largely due to three Regional offices that were located in the Bales Employment Area, which slightly skews the resulting analysis.

Figure 18 illustrates each PRE sector as a share of East Gwillimbury’s total PRE employment.

Figure 18: Distribution of PRE in East Gwillimbury, 2016



Source: urbanMetrics inc. based on the 2016 Census of Canada.  
 Note: Accounts for jobs worked at usual place and worked from home.

As shown, Retail Trade accounts for over a third of all PRE jobs. This can be attributed to East Gwillimbury’s regional commercial node located at Yonge Street and Green Lane which includes major retailers such as Costco, Real Canadian Superstore, Lowes, Longos, Best Buy, and SilverCity Cinemas, among others.

#### 5.4.2 Current Supply of PRE

East Gwillimbury’s current supply of PRE businesses are generally scattered throughout the municipality; however, a few notable commercial nodes have been established.

**Yonge Street and Green Lane Centre** – this is the area centered on the intersection of Yonge Street and Green Lane and represents the most significant concentration of retail stores in the Town. It is designated as a “Major Local Centre” in the Official Plan, which is intended to support higher density development and high concentrations of PRE businesses.

This large format retail node includes Green Lane Centre at the southwest corner, a SilverCity Cinemas, Best Buy, and accompanying retail pads located at the southeast corner and Yonge Green Lane Common, anchored by a Lowes Home Improvement Warehouse, LA Fitness, and Longos at the northeast corner of the intersection. Other major tenants in this node include Costco, Real Canadian Superstore, Michael’s, and Bed Bath & Beyond in the Green Lane Centre. This commercial node has historically fed off its location in proximity to Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket and has gained regional drawing power and serves

a trade area that includes Newmarket and other surrounding jurisdictions.

Figure 19 illustrates the Yonge Street and Green Lane Centre node with select major retailers.

Figure 19: Yonge Street and Green Lane Commercial Node



Source: urbanMetrics inc.

The remaining PRE market nodes are significantly less concentrated. The following section briefly discusses each node.

- **Holland Landing** – this node has a limited amount of commercial and services space. It functions as a local serving node to the Holland Landing community’s small existing population.
- **Mount Albert** – this modest commercial node is located within the Mt. Albert Employment Area. Retail uses include Foodland, Home Hardware, as well as additional neighbourhood serving restaurants and services. While it is technically an employment area, the lands are isolated and abut low-density residential neighbourhoods. It is likely these lands will continue to function as a commercial node for the community more so than an employment area.
- **Sharon** – this small, scattered PRE node is located at the intersection of Mt. Albert Road and Leslie Street. Most notably, this node contains the Town of East Gwillimbury municipal offices. The remaining businesses comprise of personal services, restaurants, convenience stores, and speciality food stores that serve the local population and municipal workforce.
- **Bales Employment Area** – located at Woodbine Avenue and Davis Drive, this is East Gwillimbury’s most occupied employment area. It is important to note that it also functions as a PRE node for the municipality. There are multiple municipal and regional offices located at this node including

the York Regional Police Training & Education Bureau, York Region Paramedic Services Headquarters, York Region Transportation and Works Operations Centre, as well as some municipal waste depots and transportation services. These uses represent public administration and government services jobs that contribute to East Gwillimbury’s PRE sector.

East Gwillimbury’s current PRE market suffers from the municipality’s lack of established corridors and nodes. While the Yonge Street and Green Lane Centre is designated as a “Major Local Centre” and has gradually evolved into a prominent hub for PRE businesses, it generally functions as an extension to Newmarket’s regional commercial area, as the vast majority of residential lands in the vicinity of this node are in Newmarket.

Without a defined urban centre, the majority of East Gwillimbury’s PRE businesses have tended to scatter throughout its residential communities. East Gwillimbury’s GO Transit station, which is also designated as a “Major Local Centre” and could potentially evolve into an attractor for retailers and services, although this will be dependent on the ability of GO Transit to extend frequent all-day two-way service.

### 5.4.3 EG PRE Market: Looking Forward

Figure 20 illustrates the forecast relationship between East Gwillimbury’s total population and total PRE jobs between 2016 and 2041. The values are based on the York Region population and employment forecasts prepared in 2019.

East Gwillimbury is expected to add 80,000 residents over the forecast period, translating to an average annual growth rate of some 3,200 persons or 13% of the 2016 population. This significant growth will be largely driven by the completion of the Upper York Sewage Solutions (UYSS) project and will occur mainly in the communities of Sharon, Queensville, and Holland Landing. Additional growth is also anticipated along the regional corridor on Green Lane near the GO Transit Station, as well as throughout the Whitebelt.

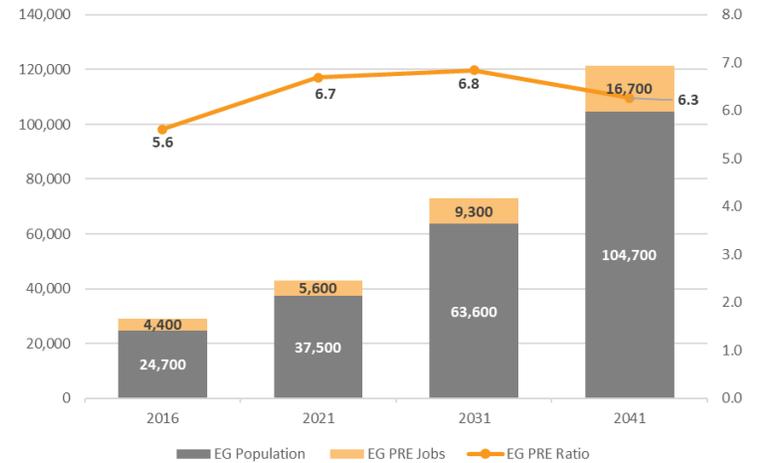
To support this rapidly growing population, East Gwillimbury is planning for an additional 12,300 PRE jobs between 2016 and 2041. As shown in Figure 20, East Gwillimbury’s PRE ratio was estimated at 5.6 in 2016 and is anticipated to peak at 6.8 in 2031, before gradually declining by 2041 to 6.3.

These projections suggest that in the future, East Gwillimbury will support fewer PRE jobs per resident than has occurred in the past. This is reasonable as the PRE ratio has been artificially inflated due to the large cluster of commercial uses at Green Lane and Yonge Street, and to a lesser extent by the Regional concentration of uses in the Bales Employment Area.

**The forecast number of PRE jobs is considered reasonable** in light of the PRE ratios in other GTA regional municipalities (excluding Toronto). As noted, East Gwillimbury is currently not planned to accommodate large scale major institutions, such as a hospital or university or a major new tourism attraction – which would have a significant impact on the need for additional PRE jobs. Although as the Town grows, it will likely be capable of attracting uses and

activities that cannot currently locate locally due to its small population size.

Figure 20: Population to PRE Job Comparison, East Gwillimbury



Source: urbanMetrics inc., based on the 2019 York Region Population Forecasts. NOTE: 2016 PRE value differs from the 2016 Place of Work Census data.

There is the potential that more of the workforce will be working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While this could contribute to higher PRE job numbers, it is more realistic that most employees will return to a flexible work schedule that combines office and home-based work. As such, these employees would not be considered as part of the PRE category.

We anticipate that the build out of East Gwillimbury’s built boundary and Whitebelt will be predominantly residential development, with modest growth in office and institutional uses. It is likely that the majority of East Gwillimbury’s future PRE jobs

increase in relation to population growth. That being said, we recognize that East Gwillimbury's need for PRE jobs could change in the future if the Green Lane regional corridor is fully realized with higher density, mixed-use and office development or a major use such as a university campus is attracted to the Town.

## 5.5 Future of Retail in the GTA

As retail trade is the predominant PRE sector in East Gwillimbury, it represents an important industry for the municipality's local economy. This section explores the future of retail across the GTA more broadly, and specifically discusses the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis on the industry.

Globally, it is well documented that the nature of retail is evolving due to the proliferation of digital platforms and e-commerce opportunities, and the decline of the traditional mall. While the COVID-19 pandemic is not anticipated to invent new behaviours or habits, it will likely accelerate these pre-existing trends which will lead to permanent change throughout the retail industry.

"We are entering a new evolutionary stage of retail, in which big companies will get bigger, many mom-and-pop dreams will burst, chains will proliferate and flatten the idiosyncrasies of many neighbourhoods, more economic activity will flow into e-commerce, and restaurants will undergo a transformation unlike anything the industry has experienced since Prohibition"

"How the Pandemic will Change American Retail Forever" The Atlantic.

COVID-19 has had a significant and detrimental impact on small businesses, specifically retail and restaurant businesses, which have had to remain closed for the longest duration throughout the beginning of the pandemic. This being said, retail companies within the same industry sectors have been impacted differently. While restaurants have had to lay staff off, grocery store operators and delivery services have had to hire temporary staff to meet spikes in demand.

**Overall, retail capacity over the coming decades is anticipated to be reduced, relocated, and repurposed.**

The changing nature of retail, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, has caused thousands of businesses to close physical stores and/or go out of business. This reduction of occupied retail space has led to significant vacancies on main streets and in malls. If left unmanaged, retail vacancies can cause a series of negative ripple effects: on the consumer's confidence that retail stores serve as hubs for civic life, on commercial real estate owner's ability to receive rent payments, and on tax revenues given the significant role that commercial districts play in municipal fiscal health.

Second, as many businesses cannot survive in emptied office districts while still paying downtown rents, retailers may look to relocate and open new locations in the suburbs where people are residing and working from home.

Lastly, the retail industry as we know it will be completely transformed and repurposed as COVID-19 accelerates the shift

towards contactless delivery and pick-up of all products, including meals and groceries, among others.

The following subsections explore these impacts in more detail.

### 5.5.1 Rise of E-Commerce

Online shopping has significantly curtailed the growth in physical retail space. Some notable retailers, including J-Crew Canada and Black’s Photography, have fully transitioned to an e-commerce platform, and have either reduced their store footprints and/or have closed all physical stores.

Online shopping has evolved from a regular habit for a small segment of consumers to a crucial part of our commercial infrastructure. While it is growing faster than physical retail, it still only represented about 15% of total global retail sales in 2019. However, due to restrictions instituted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and consumer safety concerns, this share is now expected to increase rapidly from 15% to 25%. Much of e-commerce growth is attributable to Amazon, which is growing at above-market rates and was expected to account for nearly 40% of total online sales in 2019 in North America.

More locally, in the recent report “Canadian Retail Sales Update: November 2020”, Colliers reported that e-commerce spending peaked at 10.9% of total retail sales in April 2020 and fell to 5.9% by September 2020. E-commerce spending is anticipated to stay in flux as ongoing and unpredictable lockdowns impact local markets. It is also likely that the e-commerce spending is underestimated as it can take a variety of forms and is not necessarily captured in the

statistics (for example, many retailers do not report on-line sales separately from in-store sales, customers may order an item or service on-line and pay for it in a store, etc.)

### 5.5.2 Curbside Pick-Up

This is an emerging trend that has been significantly accelerated and normalized by the COVID-19 pandemic. Courier companies, Canada Post, retailers (e.g. Loblaws, Walmart, Home Depot), and shopping centres (e.g. Penguin Pick-up) are increasingly providing centralized pick up areas for pre-ordered goods.

Simultaneously, major retailers and smaller companies are expanding their pick-up and delivery capacities. Contactless shopping will soon be considered the new normal as retailers look to other industries that offer similar services. A wide range of retailers have already adopted digital reservation systems for consumers to book dedicated shopping and pick-up appointments.

One recent example is Matty’s Patty’s Burger Club, a new restaurant located in Toronto that allows customers to order their meal in advance and pick a preferred curbside pick-up date and time. Each pick-up time is separated into 15-minute intervals to prevent sidewalk line-ups and ensure social distancing practices are maintained. This practice will likely continue post-COVID as it represents a more efficient shopping experience for customers.

### **Matty's Patty's Burger Club**



Additionally, condominium and apartment buildings are responding in different ways using concierge services and package rooms. Ultimately the use of technologies, such as electronic locks, video surveillance, and drone deliveries may result in direct delivery to individual units.

#### **5.5.3 Shift in Consumer Spending**

COVID-19 has caused the most significant disruption in consumer spending that has been recorded in recent years and has profoundly altered how people spend their discretionary income.

Before the pandemic, North Americans spent more money dining out than in grocery stores. But as restaurants closed and stay-at-home orders commenced, restaurant spending dropped about

60%, with the sharpest declines in fine-dining, lunch, and late night food. While lockdowns have subsided in many regions, social distancing practices have curbed the hospitality industry from fully recovering. Restrictions on indoor dining and limitations on restaurant and/or patio capacity has discouraged large crowds and made restaurants awkward, more expensive, and less fun.

Even before the Pandemic, restaurant chains were closing and reducing the size of outlets to accommodate pickup and delivery services, such as UberEats and Skip the Dishes.

Meanwhile, data compiled by the New York Times reported that grocery sales experienced a surge in demand and were up nearly 80% from the previous year. The strongest sectors within grocery spending include meal kits and online grocers such as Instacart. Additional pockets of retail resiliency include alcohol stores, home improvement stores and entertainment media including video streaming and gaming.

More locally, the “Canadian Retail Sales Update: November 2020”, highlighted that Canadian households aligned with global trends and spent disproportionately at furniture, appliance, and building and garden materials retailers. Interestingly, the biggest change in consumer spending was in the cannabis sector – which has seen growth of 138.4% since 2019.

#### **5.5.4 Non-traditional Retail Experiences**

While e-commerce is a growing force in the retail industry, many consumers will continue to go to physical stores for advice, to socialize, and for assessing and trying on products. Particularly in

smaller municipalities like East Gwillimbury where there is no central downtown or main street, retail stores represent community gathering spaces where people connect, and events are held.

Physical stores will take on new and non-traditional roles as retailers adopt multi-channel retailing and balance the utility of their stores while still capturing online sales. An emerging trend borne from the COVID-19 pandemic is how retailers and restaurants are adapting their space into new types of services.

Bellwoods Brewery – a popular destination in Toronto’s west end – has transformed its previously crowded patio into a new marketplace for local residents and visitors. The market is adjacent to their brewery bottle shop and sells pandemic-friendly items such as meal kits, produce baskets, candles, flower bouquets, and cookbooks, among other gifts and food items.

### 5.5.5 Repurposing Department Stores

The decline of department stores, enclosed malls, and some big box stores has been widely recognized for years. This year alone, multiple struggling department store chains filed for bankruptcy, including J.C. Penney and Neiman Marcus. Additionally, many malls across Canada have struggled to lease the large anchor units that were previously tenanted by Zellers and Target.

Amazon has been a major disrupter of the mall and department store industry, which has only been compounded by the increase of online shopping throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Innovative property management operators in the US are now working with

Amazon to transform the vacant anchor department stores into regional Amazon distribution hubs.

***Bellwood’s Brewery Before:***



***Bellwood’s Brewery After:***



Similarly, independent retailers have taken initiative to transform their own vacant brick and mortar stores. Macy's recently repurposed some stores in the United States into fulfillment centres where they process online orders and returns.

These urban distribution centres could provide crucial last-mile connections for e-commerce companies and would be strategically warehoused with common products frequently purchased by residents in the surrounding area.

### 5.5.6 Pop-up Retailing

Pop-up retailing is an ongoing trend where short-term leases are made available to trendy and upstart retailers. Particularly in downtown settings, these spaces are common in public spaces, such as parks, squares, and pedestrian streets – typically in areas with a lot of pedestrian traffic. It is also used to occupy vacant storefronts with a myriad of uses, including pop-up restaurants, shared kitchens, maker spaces, arts and cultural activities, and health clinics.

### 5.5.7 Digital Platforms

The emergence of digital delivery apps - such as UberEats, DoorDash, and Skip the Dishes - have dramatically changed the restaurant and fast food industry. Many chains are reducing the size of their seating area as a growing number of customers are picking up or having food delivered to their homes. Additionally, the proliferation of delivery apps could potentially reduce the need for on-site customer parking. However, restaurants are required to

provide dedicated parking and pick-up spaces for delivery drivers and bicyclists.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the growth in the delivery economy has led to the significant increase in delivery worker employment. Recently, Instacart reported it was hiring 300,000 new “gig” workers in the USA and Canada. The share of gig workers among all workers in Canada rose from 5.5% in 2005 to about 8.2% in 2016. Statistics Canada estimates that the growth is largely attributed to push factors such as declining employment prospects during the 2008/2009 recession. It is anticipated that a similar trend will occur in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic as it has facilitated the expansion of online platforms and crowdsourcing marketplaces which has potentially led to an overall increase of the gig economy.

### 5.5.8 Intensification of Power Centres

Across the GTA there are many examples of power centres, strip centres and enclosed malls that have been intensified with new residential development. In most cases where older and often failing plazas are undergoing intensification, the amount of retail space decreases and the focus of the retail is reduced to more local serving stores. In the case of successful malls – e.g. Bayview Village or Yorkdale, intensification results in both the addition of residential uses and an increase in retail space. It is also true that successful power centres in intensification areas, such as the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre or Golden Mile often resist early

intensification owing to the strength of their revenue streams and the cost of terminating anchor leases.

There is the potential that the commercial node at Yonge Street and Green Lane in East Gwillimbury will likely intensify as development occurs around the GO Station. However, intensification will likely be a long-term process in this area.

## **5.6 Implications for East Gwillimbury Land Needs and Official Plan Policies**

The analysis and discussion in this section illustrates that East Gwillimbury’s PRE market is generally healthy and serves a regional market area. The most significant node of PRE businesses is located at Yonge Street and Green Lane which has attracted major retailers, food and personal services, and entertainment uses. This node is anticipated to continue evolving as the northwest corner builds out with additional retail uses.

Both the Town and Region should leverage this node’s concentration of PRE businesses – as well as its proximity to the GO Transit station - as it could function as a logical urban centre for East Gwillimbury. Once an urban centre is established, the Town will have a stronger ability to attract a wider diversity of PRE businesses, including institutions, healthcare, government services, and accommodation and food services. The future of PRE along the Green Lane regional corridor will hinge on the construction of mixed-use development and potential office or institutional uses.

Policies in the Official Plan should be flexible and permissive to allow for a diverse range of PRE businesses, however attention must be paid to the outcomes envisioned for each area.

### **5.6.1 Employment Areas**

PRE businesses are often an important part of Employment Areas by serving the on-site workforce, acting as a buffer between industrial uses and nearby residential communities, and occupying undesirable sites that are not large enough to accommodate industrial uses. In addition, Employment Areas provide an important location for PRE businesses that cannot be accommodated in and/or cannot afford traditional commercial areas, including storage uses, banquet halls, car dealerships, automotive services, breweries, and industrial trade schools. Many of these PRE uses are land intensive and not appropriate for commercial areas as they do not encourage intensification.

We believe the Official Plan should address those PRE uses that are best accommodated within Employment lands. This may vary between employment areas. Those with better access to residential areas could have permissions for a broader range of contemporary PRE businesses (i.e. commercial “ghost” kitchens and unique recreation uses such as rock climbing gyms, obstacle courses, indoor golf, etc). These uses are not generally compatible with community and commercial areas from a land use perspective; however, they have regional drawing power and could increase day-trip tourism for the municipality. In addition, the Town should review where large scale commercial uses that

require outdoor storage, such as automobile and boat dealerships, public storage outlets, automotive sales, garden centres, etc. should best be located and determine to the extent that employment areas would be required to accommodate them.

The St. Albert Employment Area is a mixed industrial/commercial area that also functions as a retail core for the community. It would likely continue to fulfill a mixed function for the surrounding community.

### **5.6.2 Community Areas (Built Boundary & Whitebelt)**

To support the Town's future population growth to 2041 and beyond, it is anticipated that all available lands within the built boundary will be required, along with some Whitebelt lands as part of an urban boundary expansion.

Within these areas, we recommend that future planning efforts continue to prioritize the build-out and intensification of "Village Core Areas" and "Major Local Centres". These areas are already located along major collector/arterial roadways and have the capacity to accommodate additional PRE businesses.

It is our opinion that when planning for PRE jobs in the Town's Community Areas, the Official Plan should permit commercial and institutional uses along corridors that have constant two-way traffic and serve as a gateway to/from a collector and/or arterial roadway. We do not recommend planning for another regional commercial node or encouraging the development of neighbourhood retail that is internal to a residential community.

In summary of this section, we believe the PRE employment projections and ratios for East Gwillimbury are reasonable for long-term planning purposes. As such, we do not believe that the Region will need to allocate additional PRE employment growth to effectively serve the forecast population.

## 6.0 Conclusions

The Region has estimated the following key points for employment and employment densities in East Gwillimbury to 2041:

- 45 jobs per net hectare for DGA employment lands;
- 40 jobs per net hectare for Whitebelt lands;
- 8 jobs per net hectare for PRE jobs in community areas (DGA and Whitebelt) – a PRE ratio of 6.3 residents per PRE job; and,
- A minimal increase in major office employment (+500 jobs between 2016 and 2041).

**Our research has demonstrated that the Region’s assumptions for employment in East Gwillimbury to 2041 are reasonable.** The Town is likely to attract a range of employment uses to their vacant employment lands in the coming decades, with densities of these uses ranging primarily from 35 to 55 jobs per net hectare, which should reasonably allow the Town to reach the Region’s density targets.

These assumptions will be used to complete our Capacity Analysis and Land Needs Assessment. This capacity analysis will provide insight into how many people and jobs will be required to build-out the entirety of East Gwillimbury’s DGA and Whitebelt lands and will comment on whether any additional Whitebelt land is required to accommodate East Gwillimbury’s growth to 2041.