

Why has a process leading to an Official Plan Amendment to convert "Area 2" to Urban Land been initiated, given that the considerations set out in Section 3.11, Policy 2 are answered in the negative?

Background

Area 2 was designated as an Urban Expansion Study Area as a result of the OMB appeal decision regarding the urban boundary in OPA 76. Now, in 2015, a comprehensive study under Policy 3.11.3 of the Official Plan has been initiated with the eventual aim of passing an Official Plan amendment to bring this area within the urban boundary.

Policy 3.11.3 reads as follows:

If the assessment in Policy 2 indicates the need for additional residential lands, the City shall commence the comprehensive study process, in accordance with the policies of this section.

So what does "the need for additional lands" mean?

Policy 3.11.2 reads as follows:

Prior to an Official Plan Amendment to designate lands for urban land uses, the City shall consider:

1. whether the lands to be designated are required in order to maintain a 10-year supply of lands designated and available, for a full range of housing types through residential development and residential intensification;
2. the status of the City's implementation strategy as set out in Section 2.2.2 Policies 11 and 12; and,
3. the achievement of intensification targets in Section 2.2.2, Policy 5.

[Amendment #76, Ministerial Modification # 46, OMB File # PL100206, September 07, 2011]

Policy 3.11.2.1 specifies that "the need for additional lands" means sufficient land to maintain a 10-year supply of lands designated and available for residential development. This requirement is established in the Provincial Policy Statement, which requires the City to:

"Maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 10 years through residential intensification and redevelopment and, if necessary, lands which are designated and available for residential development."¹

The assessment of the land supply for this purpose is conducted by the City through the Vacant Urban Residential Land Survey, last conducted for 2014 and published in October 2015. This survey considers all lands designated Urban Area on Schedule A, excluding Urban Expansion Study Areas. Through an analysis of recent patterns of demand for residential lands projected into the future, measured against the inventory of vacant urban residential lands, it comes to the following conclusion:

"The 2,181 ha in the inventory at the end of 2014 exceeded the 10 year PPS requirement. Based on projected demand of 98.0 net ha per year over the next decade and declining demand thereafter,

¹ The definition of "designated and available" is "lands designated in the official plan for urban residential use", which does not include Urban Expansion Study Areas. These fit the definition of "Designated growth areas" and are not to be considered to meet the 10-year supply of land requirement.

the 2,181 net ha land supply outside the Greenbelt (land inside the Greenbelt being all intensification) would be sufficient for approximately 24 years.”

As the supply of designated and available land to accommodate residential growth, within the existing urban boundary, is currently more than double the PPS requirement, there is no urgency, and the City is under no obligation, to undertake comprehensive studies at this time to bring designated Schedule B Urban Expansion Study Areas into the urban area. So the question is why is the City conducting a comprehensive study under Policy 3.11.3 regarding Area 2 at this time?