

EMPLOYMENT LAND CONVERSION AND INTENSIFICATION CORRIDORS:  
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL, REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL POLICY IN  
YORK REGION

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Andrew Haagsma  
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ABSTRACT

There seems to be an overall consensus in literature that industrial lands are not to be overlooked in the wake of conversion pressures to accommodate additional housing and other types of development. It is evident in literature that smart growth policies have tended to disregard the revitalization of industrial activities and this is problematic because a vital industrial presence is important in the dynamic of commercial and residential intensification. This paper explores current legislation and policy applicable to employment lands located along intensification corridors in York Region, Ontario, Canada. This is completed with three different components: a literature and policy review; a review of regional comments on conversion requests; and a site-specific case study analysis of applicant justifications for conversions in intensification areas in York Region. Research findings include a robust industrial land intensification initiative in the Region, market demand along Regional Intensification Corridors, and the potential for the implementation of an area-specific plan in the Keele employment area in the City of Vaughan. Recommendations include policy directions and considerations for planning professionals.

Key words: planning, land use, employment land, industrial land, intensification, industrial policy

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# Introduction

With the introduction of recent amendments to the *A Place To Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019* (GP) including Provincially Significant Employment Zones ([PSEZ](#)), Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs), and upper municipality Employment Area mapping, there have been requests and comments regarding clarification of certain employment land policies. The province hopes to “unlock land for residential development” while using this designation system to appropriately protect employment areas of importance in relation to employment trends and forecasts. While the smart growth policy regime that exists in the province encourages collaboration of various levels of government in directing appropriate intensification policies, the intensification directed towards intensification corridors in employment lands needs to be explored in the context of existing local and regional policies and stakeholder comments on the related employment land conversion applications. PSEZs may or may not be beneficial in the sense that employment land conversions for mixed use, residential, and other land use designation changes may still be reviewed at the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) based on various timelines of municipalities.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, this presents an opportunity to regularly review conversion applications that would help in achieving minimum residential and employment intensification targets set out by the GP.

Long-term protection of Employment Areas is crucial to the Regional economy and these lands are indispensable to the Greater Golden Horseshoe’s (GGH) economic market. While recent amendments to the GP intervene in the process of employment land use conversion at a provincial level, responsibility of dealing with conversions lies with the upper-tier regional municipality versus the local municipality (Regional Municipality of York, 2019) and these new policies permit conversions of employment land to residential land outside of an MCR (Speer, 2020). This will require crucial collaboration and discussions among local, regional, and provincial levels of government as the Province markets its “Open for Business” agenda. Within York Region, which is currently undergoing their MCR, there exists Employment Areas that are crucial to its broader context. Since this region will continue to play an increasingly important role in the economy of the GGH, I will be analyzing the criteria that may determine how Employment Areas are either transitioned or preserved within the 2041 planning horizon and beyond and how applicable stakeholders address these initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Stated by Paul Freeman, Chief Planner of York Region in answering [council members’ questions](#)

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and contribute to the understanding and discussion of policy and regulatory tools that are being considered in the process of evaluating employment land conversion applications. I hope that this observation will aid planning professionals and the development community in understanding the opportunities and strengths of employment land designations in their use for accommodating future growth as there generally seems to be a disconnect between the public and private sectors. More specifically, I will discuss employment intensification within urban boundaries on Regional Intensification Corridors in York Region and build on previous literature on the topic of employment land management. Building a sustainable precedent for the intensification of employment lands will be crucial in the context of Highway 7 as a Regional Intensification Corridor.

## Research Methods

This research paper will use a literature review along with the review of a case study to formulate a set of recommendations for a site-specific case study within York Region. In addition, an exploration of the management of employment lands in the Region with current land use conversion applications will be used to recommend a set of policy directions and considerations for the local municipality of Vaughan and the Region.

## Literature Review

The first part of this research used a literature review to explore the previous literature that discusses the implications and process of industrial/employment land conversion and intensification from an international and local perspective. The outcome of this literature review reveals how employment lands are evolving in a post-industrial world among other implications regarding macroeconomic factors, performance, firm expansion, various policy tools, and land use efficiency

## Conversion and Intensification of Employment Lands

Ultimately, the global perception is that the intensification of employment lands is a form of smart growth and leads to a more sustainable urban form. The conversion of relatively inexpensive land to more sensitive uses is justified from a highest and best use analysis perspective, but conversion that goes unchecked from a policy perspective can lead to a weakened urban economic base and contribute to industrial-sector suburban sprawl (Leigh and Hoelzel, 2012; Ferm & Jones, 2017; Park & Leigh, 2017). In China, for example, the intensification of employment/industrial lands to reduce inefficiency is identified as necessary and urgent and because of this, the implementation of much more effective policies and measures are needed. It has been argued that the amount of greenfield land saved and increased efficiency output can define intensification potential in employment/industrial lands. Some barriers in Chinese policy regarding inefficiency of employment/industrial lands include the internalization of external industrial land use costs, intensification and efficiency incentives, unsound market allocation mechanisms, and the inadequacy of the transformation of industry from extensive to intensive (Wang, Shen & Pei, 2020).

This employment/industrial land efficiency contextual situation is not directly applicable to York Region due to differences in governmental and structural urban differences, but it offers

insights as to the methodology in evaluating the efficiency of employment/industrial land use. Wang, Shen & Pei (2020) use the quantitative model of stochastic frontier analysis to evaluate efficiency loss in three Chinese urban agglomerations. The general suggestion offered by Wang, Shen & Pei is that this issue needs to be solved in a broader perspective rather than in isolation (Wang, Shen & Pei, 2020). The implementation of PSEZs Regional Intensification corridors and the smart growth policy regime in York Region and the Province respectively exemplifies this because of recent provincial intervention in the policy regime which is in a wider context than the metropolitan scale.

A region that more closely reflects the market context of York Region is the San Francisco area since its characteristic that it has centrally located industrial land that is experiencing land conversion. Chapple states that the San Francisco case study contains aging industrial buildings and a concentration of smaller business, which is applicable to the case study area used in this paper. The conclusion that policy makers should take a role in retaining identified existing firms that are likely to grow by assisting them in growing in place (Chapple, 2014) would be applicable to the intensification initiatives that exist in the City of Vaughan in its employment areas. Specifically, along Highway 7 which is the case study described later in this paper. These firms that grow in place are less likely to convert due to their ability to meet rising demands for rent and other real estate pressures (Lester, Kaza & Kirk, 2013) and will result in significant contribution to the employment intensification goal set out by smart growth policies.

Specific to Canada, there has been some exploration of the conversion of employment land use designations in the GTA. Justifications in employment land conversion applications have been assessed in Toronto and Markham in previous research papers through various lens' that include housing affordability and employment land protection policy effectiveness (Akash, 2015). OMB (now LPAT) decisions, developers from a market perspective, and city planners supporting industrial diversity have shown that there needs to be a coordinated consistency between layers of policy regarding employment lands (Cogliano, 2012). Additionally, another finding is that zoning provisions in employment lands need to better reflect market conditions and the goals of planning authorities. Toronto Official Plan amendments and policies (OPA 231) show a discrepancy between planning goals and zoning based on what they consider to be sensitive employment uses (Jowett, 2019). Existing zoning in some industrial pockets in Toronto need to be reviewed to reflect the needs and operation of these lands in today's context (Jowett, 2019). This is due to the growing pressures brought onto the land use planning system from industry lobbyists and real estate interests (Godrach and Gibson, 2019) and complications

that smart growth policy and development that employment land policies are experiencing (Leigh and Hoelzel, 2012).

Greenberg (2017) discusses the appropriateness of manufacturing activity in the future development of the GTA. The author warns against industrial land use categories that become over-specified to hinder the economic changes of innovation and the creative industry. The stock response that municipalities can re-designate or convert lands at the time of an MCR is a burdensome process, has uncertain outcomes, and experiences a high level of resistance (Greenberg, 2017) since it is typically a very political process. Greenberg calls for a more viable policy solution for lands that are surrounding transit stations that goes beyond the current MCR process (Leigh and Hoelzel, 2012; Greenberg, 2017). This may be visualized as a pre-emptive study by the local municipality or region in the form of an OPA or secondary plan. While this partially is the case throughout the region (VMC, Concord GO, and Vaughan Mills Secondary Plans), the corridors between such areas require further study for they are based on transit infrastructure investments and are in clear demand of redevelopment (this and feasibility is discussed later in this paper). TOD models should be explored by planners to include industrial uses and whether mixed-use is appropriate or not for these parcels, there needs to be some identification of potential intensification opportunities and barriers (Leigh and Hoelzel, 2012). Greenberg refers to the Central Area Plan and the Barabara Hall "Kings Initiative" in the context of the industrial lands throughout the Region. The suburban areas, which make up a large percentage of the Region, need to reconsider segregated land use policies in order to accommodate successful redevelopment (Greenberg, 2017).

Furthermore, employment land policy makers are looking to rezone industrial lands to accommodate the changing face of employment in order to retain non-industrial and high-tech business. Zoning implications shape the viability of industrial lands and may ultimately shape the way that businesses choose to locate in regions. Chapple (2014) uses multivariate analysis with historic zoning maps and National Establishment Time Series in the San Francisco Bay Area to draw a conclusion with a framework for land use and economic development strategies that create further jobs on existing industrial land. Additionally, the consideration of zoning bylaws in the efficient use and intensification of employment lands is crucial due to varying degrees of demand for industrial demand. A cost-benefit analysis methodology created by Howland (2010) may identify areas best suited for employment intensification and zoning amendments without imposing a loss in the local economy and employment/industrial area. This addresses the gap where cities are rarely considering business dynamics and job creation on industrial land in making decisions to introduce residential and commercial uses in

employment/industrial areas (Chapple, 2014). The creation of secondary plans in evaluating land use conversions and evaluating the viability of designated intensification corridors and policies may benefit from this methodology.

Lester, Kaza & Kirk (2013) analyze the effectiveness of industrial preservation policies in limiting conversion and argue that local governments should be locationally strategic in how they direct preservation efforts. Specifically, the model that is developed predicts the probability of land use change based on the parcel-level consideration of neighbourhood real estate dynamics, establishment and industry dynamics, existing industrial protection policies, and environmental hazards in combination with locational factors. The most important of the findings of industrial preservation policy from Cook County, IL and Mecklenburg County, NC is that land use planning efforts to preserve industrial lands were effective in limiting conversion risk. Another finding was that parcels located further away from the Central Business District (CBD) were less likely to convert while the further they were from rail depots and freeway ramps, the more likely they were to convert (Lester, Kaza & Kirk, 2013). This presents a conflicting scenario when applying these findings to the case study in this paper due to the development of the VMC as a CBD and its proximity to 400-series highways and the CN MacMillan Yard.

However, it is still evident that warehouse space is in demand in inner-city markets due to smaller operations and the need for efficient distribution activities (Fitzgerald and Leigh, 2002; Wolf-Powers, Doussard, Schrock, Heying, Eisenburger & Marotta, 2017). To visualize this risk, land use planners can enact preservation policies at a neighbourhood level after identifying clusters of parcels susceptible to conversion using their empirical analysis. This can proactively guide the development of alternative sensitive uses or employment area preservation policies in relation to infrastructure investments, regulatory changes, and broader economic trends of the region and nation (Howland, 2010; Lester, Kaza & Kirk, 2013). To contextualize this concept with regards to transportation investments, Credit conducts a spatial analysis of business creation. This study concludes that new transit systems have a positive relationship with business creation if they are a part of an extensive network, connect employment centres, and contain walkable environments (Credit, 2019). As mixed-use centres in York Region are built out over the next few decades, these conclusions give justification for area-specific planning measures along intensification corridors within Employment Areas.

A barrier to considering the previously discussed methods of holistic land use planning in employment/industrial areas may be the paradoxical historical rhetoric of deindustrialization trends and the advancement of manufacturing visions. It has been revealed that smart growth

policies and initiatives in the U.S. do not appropriately reflect on the specific intensification and reinvestment of employment or industrial areas. Pursuing smart growth policies related to industrial development is not to be disregarded as these lands are crucial in the effort to reduce industrial sprawl and provide a diverse local job base (Leigh and Hoelzel, 2012). To further the study industrial smart growth, Godach and Gibson (2019) conduct a comparative document analysis of Australian and U.S. manufacturing policy and find that policy goals and strategies, while being integral in the incorporation of significant economic benefits and resilience, may hinder a city's ability to retain working-class jobs or new forms of craft manufacturing (Godrach and Gibson, 2019). Leigh and Hoelzel (2012) also explore smart growth literature in a similar method and conclude that employment revitalization is typically specific to commercial employment districts and focus on expanding the diversity of mixed-use and residential development.

Without a robust policy language around the importance of manufacturing and the consequence of its simplification in policy, industrial lands may become more likely to convert to lands that accommodate higher value residential development investments. Another finding from Godach and Gibson's (2019) study of manufacturing policy is that there is a gap in addressing the variety and diversity of space types that are needed for new urban manufacturing. Planners are encouraged here to reframe economic development policy, workforce training, and the overreliance on property/consumption led development strategies and develop new avenues of research regarding urban manufacturing. Specifically, the authors mention a detailed place-focused research as a foundation for policy that better addresses the changing landscape of urban manufacturing (Godrach and Gibson, 2019). This concept is needed in areas that are receiving conversion pressure to accommodate mixed-use/residential in the context of viable, functioning, and contiguous Employment Areas.

There seems to be an overall consensus among literature that industrial lands are not to be overlooked in the wake of conversion pressures to accommodate additional housing and other types of development. It is evident in literature that smart growth policies have tended to disregard the revitalization of industrial activities and this is problematic because a vital industrial presence is important in the dynamic of commercial and residential intensification (Leigh and Hoelzel, 2012). Furthermore, this topic of interest is important because the efficient operation and viability of large agglomerations of employment areas makes economic changes such as the recent resurgence of manufacturing activity and technology industries (Lester, Kaza & Kirk, 2013).

## The City of Chicago's Industrial Corridor Program

Resulting from my literature review, there have been a few employment land strategies that are insightful in the management of Employment Lands in York Region. One case study that I will briefly discuss include the City of Chicago's Industrial Corridor (IC) program. This program is focused on viable industrial areas in the City of Chicago that are along key transportation routes and are experiencing pressure for redevelopment. ICs are not formal zoning districts, but they are intended to catalyze the concentration of industrial activity and the investment in industrial infrastructure, land use policies, and economic development efforts (U.S. Equities Realty, LLC, 2013).

The Chicago Industrial Corridor Program was adopted in 1992 and operates in conjunction with the Planned Manufacturing District (PMD) Programs (designated with a core and buffer zones that reflect the belief that commercial uses adjacent to industrial uses are less disruptive than residential uses). This form of policy has proven to be effective in limiting the conversion of crucial industrial lands (Lester, Kaza & Kirk, 2013) and guiding desirable development patterns that complement their function. The City implements this program by adopting a land use plan that designates high priority areas for long-term industrial development and investment. This designation sometimes fits within the PMD Program and sometimes stands alone but is usually part of a larger employment area.<sup>2</sup> These ICs use amended provisions to the Chicago Zoning Ordinance to allow for development standards that meet the modern needs of industrial activity while prohibiting any rezoning where possible. When rezonings are considered in proximity or within the ICs, a study related to any impacts on the viable industrial area needs to be conducted. The criteria for any rezoning of any land within an IC is as follows (U.S. Equities Realty, 2013):

- the size of the district;
- the number of existing firms and employees that would be affected;
- recent and planned public and private investments within the district;
- the potential of the district to support additional industrial uses and increased manufacturing employment;
- the proportion of land in the district currently devoted to industrial uses;
- the proportion of land in the district currently devoted to non-manufacturing uses; and

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<sup>2</sup> An illustration of Chicago's Industrial Corridors and Planned Manufacturing Districts can be found in [Appendix A](#)

- the area's importance to the city as an industrial district.

This criteria offers a method of evaluating land use conversions at a local level rather than a regional level which will be discussed later in this paper in the context of York Region.

In addition, the City regularly identifies and updates the infrastructure needs of industry to be certain that these corridors remain competitive. There is also an economic development program that markets industrial park opportunities to attract, expand, and retain industry. And finally, rail access in development areas are identified to enhance the development and marketing of all rail properties (Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 2017).

Currently, a number of ICs in the City of Chicago are undergoing a Modernization Initiative that includes consultation with the public and boundary refinements to facilitate trends of advanced manufacturing, tech industries, freight/transportation growth, and traditional manufacturing. This process facilitates the redevelopment of underutilized industrial land and enables the city to widely market its goals and foster new investments in these designations (Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development, 2013). This modernization initiative is directed towards Industrial Corridors that are closest to the CBD and are experiencing increasing land values. As a part of this initiative, an Industrial Corridor System Fee is charged in the process of land conversion and zoning amendments for tax revenue that is allocated to the rest of the 25 ICs (Danilo, 2018). This would focus on primarily industrial uses that are transitioning into larger office, commercial spaces, and potentially residential uses. A proposed fee would need to address the loss of essential industrial land that is key to the function of the area as a whole. However, buildings that are reused for job generating activities would be exempt from a fee. This proposed fee would be charged by the cost per square foot (based on acquisition, rehabilitation or construction, environmental remediation, local industrial street improvements, and the developer's share of costs) to replace the industrial property lost to redevelopment and would be updated every five years based on collected data. The funds collected would go towards the IC program to enhance the viability of the corridor system (support infrastructure, building rehabilitation, site preparation, environmental remediation, and acquisition) (Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 2017). Due to the differences in development charge costs and other fees from Illinois to Ontario, this fee system may not be fiscally possible as there is already a system in place to monetize development costs on behalf of the municipality in Ontario. This case study and the process of evaluation for the purpose of accommodating industrial modernization may be applicable to the new amendments to the GP

regarding the MCR process within PSEZs and MTSAs in the context of York Region's Highway 7 Corridor.

## York Region Case Study

The second part of my research includes a discussion and contextualization of the above findings within an area of York Region. Furthermore, within these findings and analysis, I contextualize my case study of choice: the designated Regional Intensification Corridor of Highway 7.

The City of Vaughan has experienced excellent employment growth as a result of two major intermodal rail yards, excellent highway connections, close proximity to Pearson International Airport and availability of large tracts of relatively inexpensive land. The development pattern in the city has been characterized by two large Employment Areas that contain single-story structures within industrial parks or stand-alone retail centres (City of Vaughan, 2010). These urban conditions in combination with a smart growth policy regime have made these lands prime areas for redevelopment and intensification. The importance of these employment lands in the context of not only the GTA, but the entire Province, in their operation viability for various industries such as manufacturing are being progressively considered by the Province in recent regulations as development and conversion pressures grow.

The two large Employment Areas in Vaughan are labeled as the Vaughan Enterprise Zone (VEZ) to the west and the CN/Concord/Highway 400 Employment Area to the east. Both areas have direct access to 400-series highways and major intermodal rail yards and have both been identified as Provincially Significant Employment Areas by the Province. However, the VEZ has been identified by the Region as part of the [Strategic Employment Lands](#) designation along with the Highway 400 North (ROPA 52) where the CN/Concord/Highway 400 Employment Area has not. For this paper, I have chosen the Keele Employment Area and its Regional Intensification Corridor to study.<sup>3</sup> Since the Keele Employment Area has not been designated as Strategic, but within a PSEZ, I have applied my findings from various background reports, studies, and my literature review to the lands that have been chosen to accommodate intensification based on local and regional policy regarding Intensification Corridors. This intensification corridor includes Highway 7 where landowners and the private sector have

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<sup>3</sup> A detailed map of Vaughan's Industrial Districts and Employment Areas can be found in [Appendix B](#)

submitted land conversion applications for lands that are adjacent to this corridor.<sup>4</sup> This area is of interest because it is located in close proximity to local, regional, and provincial growth centres: VMC and Concord GO. In this paper, I will discuss the conversion criteria, comments made by regional staff regarding these conversion applications, and related land use policies in light of transit and other infrastructural investments and existing employment land policies. The results of this discussion will outline points of discussion among various sectors, stakeholder interests, policy considerations, and a potential suggestion for a framework for the Region's Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas that can be applied beyond the case study (Jane Street, Rutherford Road, etc).

The has Region prepared a document regarding [planning practices in centres and corridors](#) in 2013 and this provides some direction as to how the Region is to further support intensification and city-building. The document recognizes the various functions and contexts of these corridors and their importance as not only movement corridors, but also as places. The long-term vision for the Highway 7 corridor is for it to develop into a “multi-use urban street with medium and high-density residential development that supports an integrated community where residents live, work, play, and learn.” and this is stated to coincide with transportation infrastructure investments (GO, YRT, VIVA, etc.).

Regarding employment, this study emphasizes the attraction of unique job markets and provides approaches to create incentives for office development and institution attraction. This may be more applicable to the mixed-use centres that are at the ends of Regional Intensification corridors in Employment Areas, but are important to consider, nonetheless. Highway 7 contains Key Development Areas (policy further described later in this paper) along its fronting land parcels and this is applicable to built place precedents mentioned in the Region's Centres and Corridors document. The U.S. case studies of the City of Chicago's Industrial Corridors and the Charlotte and Mecklenburg County's Industrial Activity Centres previously discussed provides justification for the further exploration of the chosen case study. As plans for the VIVA Rapid Bus network along Highway 7 to be transitioned into a light rail network, it will be important to consider station areas along this network for future employment dev

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<sup>4</sup> See conversion application map in [Appendix C](#)

## Market Context

In this section, I analyze various financial and market background reports that complement my literature review by providing quantitative and policy formulation information that would reflect the intensification/employment measures taken in other case studies from metropolitan regions.

## Market and Employment Trends

Traditional and service-based industries both play an important role in the economy of the GGH. While traditional industries like manufacturing and agri-food businesses continue to play a key role, technology and globalization are transforming the GGH economy as it shifts towards knowledge-intensive and service-based economic activity growth (Province of Ontario, 2019). The incorporation of this new economic activity will be and has been key for the competitiveness of the GGH on an international scale. While globalization poses a challenge to the GGH economy, there are many opportunities that catalyze economic restructuring and competitiveness. These opportunities or elements are the proximity, concentration, diversity, interaction, accessibility, efficiency, and quality of the urban environment (Blais, 2015). Part of the merit for this paper comes from the fact that both of these industries (traditional and service-based) need to be accommodated and the management of Employment Lands within the Region is pivotal in the success of the Province and country since the GGH represents one-quarter of the national economy (Blais, 2015).

The growth outlook for the GTHA and York Region is positive in light of demographic shifts, the changing nature of work, and changing consumer preferences while manufacturing in the region has largely stabilized and all new growth being in the service, knowledge-based, and creative industries. In addition, the in-migration of populations will grow the labour force and employment opportunities as Canada is one of the most immigrant friendly economies in the world (Hemson Consulting, 2019; Blais, 2015). In addition to recent trends of the increase in knowledge-intensive and service-based economic activity growth (+32% for the Region and +40% for the nation in the previous decade), automation is a significant trend that will change employment. York Region is slated to be well-positioned in sustaining this change as 24% of the Region's employed labor force within the next two decades is at risk of being automated. This specifically targets manufacturing industries, which are located within Employment Areas. However, compared to the national average (42%) of jobs at risk, the Region fares well due to

its diversified economy. The accommodation of this industry shift will create higher-skilled industry jobs which will occur throughout employment land intensification and development along Regional Intensification Corridors (Regional Municipality of York, 2019).

Ultimately, the evolution in employment is resulting in changes to land use, built form, and locational preference. In Employment Areas, existing buildings are being retrofit to accommodate higher occupancy densities that include service sector jobs and flex office space. Trends for amenity-rich and accessible work environments are changing the landscape of how office uses are designed. The future of employment contains higher-skilled occupational growth but also a relatively stable condition for manufacturing and a growing services industry with the potential for the manufacturing sector to outperform with a future downfall being unlikely (Hemson Consulting, 2019).

Toronto has been experiencing recent concentrations of office growth and this presents some competitive challenges for York Region. While the VMC and Markham City Centre are prime competitive areas for office locations, the office space available in downtown Toronto is about to come onto the market. However, demand for land in Employment Areas is anticipated to remain strong and this is due to e-commerce, demand for office flex space, and professional service-type activities. Additionally, manufacturing will continue to play an important role in the demand for new building space, with less workers and more robots (AI) relative to the past. While overall amounts of manufacturing space is uncertain, these industries will be of strategic importance to the Region. In a spatial context, as land supply reaches its limits in the south, the north will be expected to experience more concentrations of growth (Hemson Consulting, 2019). This can potentially occur as older Employment Areas of the Region get built out and intensified that Employment Areas like Highway 400 N will further contribute to firm accommodation. Regarding strategic economic development strategies, the recent introduction of MTSA's in the GP will include significant areas of established industrial and office-type uses.

The NEPTIS Foundation has identified the case study area in this paper as being a part of one of three major suburban regional employment “megazones.” This zone is called the Tor-West Megazone and covers a large area in the City of Vaughan and North Toronto and the specific northeast subzone is specific to this paper’s focus. According To the 2017 policy brief, the megazone accommodates approximately 140,000 jobs (2011) with ~45,000 jobs in manufacturing, ~11,000 in construction, ~20,000 in wholesale trade, and transportation, and ~20,000 in finance and business activities (Blais, 2017). Since then, York Region employment as a whole has grown by 2.2% from 2018 - 2019 (654,650 total for mid-year 2019) (Regional Municipality of York, 2020) with slightly higher rates in previous years (see chart) and these

numbers can be assumed to have grown accordingly for the Tor-York West Megazone. Realizing the potential for the identified megazone will require leveraging of its existing employment base and economic assets, integrating proactive planning and economic development strategies, improving access through transit investments, directing transit-oriented development of office uses, and building upon the existing manufacturing cluster (which is by far the most significant industry in the district). The northeast sector (see map) of the megazone contains the largest number of jobs and a significant concentration of warehousing and transportation activities. The top three sectors in the northeast sector are as follows: manufacturing, construction and utilities (47%), warehousing and transportation (21%), and finance and business services (14%). While the area experienced a loss of close to ~1,700 manufacturing jobs from 2001 to 2011, it gained ~10,200 jobs in the warehousing and transportation, finance and business services, and population-related jobs sectors.

The census tract surrounding the CN intermodal facility has an employment density of 24 jobs/hectare (based on developable lands), which is low compared to the average of 25 - 35 jobs/hectare (Blais, 2017). This potentially signifies that operations are larger or that intensification opportunities are higher in this tract. The NEPTIS report outlines intensification opportunities that align with current regional and local policy. The lands west of the 400 along Highway 7 and the VMC are identified as areas to accommodate future mixed-use and office development where the industrial areas surrounding may be limited in the short term. Additionally, the large-footprint, single-story buildings covering large portions of the lot does not present easy insertion of new buildings, but rather additions and retrofitting (Blais, 2017). The existing conditions identified in the manufacturing cluster are dense and diverse, but there are opportunities to leverage, strengthen, and further diversify this area.

**TABLE 1 - Comparison of Annual Employment Growth Rates: Canada, Ontario, Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and York Region, 2019**

	Canada	Ontario	Greater Toronto Area <sup>1</sup>	York Region <sup>2</sup>
2014-2015	1.0%	1.1%	4.3%	2.6%
2015-2016	0.4%	0.5%	0.9%	3.4%
2016-2017	2.1%	1.8%	1.4%	3.3%
2017-2018	1.1%	2.0%	2.8%	3.3%
2018-2019	2.2%	2.5%	3.8%	2.2%

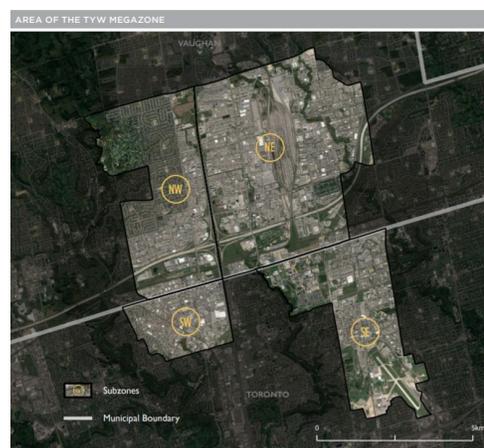
Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development Branch and Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, 3-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality

NOTES: <sup>1</sup> Greater Toronto Area labour force employment growth approximated by the Toronto Economic Region

<sup>2</sup> York Region figures based on 2019 employment survey results and estimates for home-based, farm-based, and no contact businesses.

The Statistics Canada's labour force data provides a broad overview of employment trends at the national, provincial and GTA levels. Direct comparisons should not be made when comparing the Statistics Canada's labour force data to York Region's employment survey data. Refer to Attachment 1 on page 3 for a more detailed explanation.

*Table 1 - Annual Employment Growth Rates*  
(Regional Municipality of York, 2019)



*Figure 1 - Tor-West Megazone*

(The Neptis Foundation, 2017)

Regarding office development, the Region has historically seen greenfield development but is now experiencing a shift to urban-type office development in existing Employment Areas due to diminishing greenfield opportunities and smart growth policy initiatives. From a macroeconomic perspective, office based employment is expected to have a significant share of overall employment growth over the next 30 years. Specific to the Region, it is expected that the Region will accommodate approximately 15% or 3.6 million square feet over this period of time. It may be important to note here the trend of increasing office densities due to the shift towards offsite jobs and work from home situations (Regional Municipality of York, 2019). Over the past 15 years, office development patterns have shifted towards areas with live/work opportunities and access to higher-order transit (e.g. downtown Toronto). Since the location of office development is greatly affected by access/proximity to high-order transit and services/amenities, tenants are located in environments that feature mixed-use development and these aspects in the Region are expected to improve with time. However, based on a financial feasibility analysis of office development, stand alone office development within the Region's Centres/Corridors is unfavorable due to higher development costs and land costs. Therefore, office development along corridors in the short-term needs to be either/and financially incentivised or to be included in mixed-use development projects in order to be economically viable (Watson & Associates, 2015). This potentially presents a problematic situation along certain intensification corridors within employment areas that restrict mixed-use developments but are encouraged to intensify where manufacturing and warehousing activity is at max capacity according to land use permissions.

Centres and corridors throughout the region contain a range of development feasibility timelines and are ultimately competing directly with office space in nearby municipalities. In the context of my case study, the VMC holds the strongest short- to medium-term opportunity for office development. The surrounding corridors within Employment Areas are part of the Highway 7 west area and are identified as areas that will require a longer-term outlook for office development potential. Overall, the Region has experienced some limited growth compared to its success in accommodating residential growth. As mentioned earlier, this analysis suggests that office space development needs to be part of mixed-use developments to be economically viable in intensification corridor environments (Watson & Associates, 2015).

**Figure E-1**  
**York Region Centres and Corridors**  
**Market Potential for Urban Office Development**

Location	Urban Office Market Potential (Short to Medium Term – 1-10 Years)	Urban Office Market Potential (Longer Term – 10+ Years)
Regional Centres		
Markham Centre	Strong	Strong
Vaughan Metropolitan Centre	Strong	Strong
Richmond Hill Centre/Langstaff Gateway	Moderate	Strong
Newmarket Centre	Low	Moderate
Regional Corridors		
Highway 7 East (West of Markham Centre)	Moderate	Strong
Yonge Street Thornhill	Moderate	Strong
Yonge Street Richmond Hill	Low	Moderate
Highway 7 East (East of Markham Centre)	Low	Moderate
Highway 7 West	Low	Moderate
Yonge Street Newmarket/Aurora	Low	Low
Davis Drive	Low	Low

*Table 2 - York Region Centres and Corridors Market Potential for Urban Office Development*

(Watson & Associates, 2015)

Municipalities around the world and in Canada are changing the way they plan Employment Areas. The Region conducted a study of several municipalities with the following conclusions: the need to allow for more flexibility in Employment Areas and the need to improve the pedestrian and built form environment (Regional Municipality of York, 2019). Based on this and the above market conditions, land use flexibility and a focus on improving the built environment are crucial for accommodating future employment growth along intensification corridors and Employment Areas as this can offer a critical advantage relative to competitive markets (MDB Insight & Watson & Associates, 2019).

## Property Tax Base

Employment lands in the context of the GTA are experiencing great pressure for a change in land use designation to accommodate residential and other development growth. This topic is addressed in the management planning system and the fiscal planning system in local governance. In the context of the urban economy and municipal finance, property taxes from industrial and employment lands contribute to the financing of municipalities as a main source of revenue. Since the business tax has been eliminated and as provinces reduce grants to municipalities, property taxes have been of growing importance (Kitchen, 2002).

In York Region, Employment Areas accommodate over 53% of the 2018 employment base and support a healthy tax base. In addition to the economic value that Employment Areas offer regions and cities in Ontario, they are heavy contributors to the overall property tax. There

is quite a difference in the property tax rate between residential and non-residential (this includes employment land types). The residential sector receives more benefits from local government services in comparison to non-residential lands and there are studies that conclude the non-residential sector is overtaxed while the residential sector is undertaxed (Kitchen, 2002). This is a common occurrence in jurisdictions around the world and property tax relief measures such as tax credits, homeowner grants, or tax deferrals are not always available for non-residential properties (Slack, 2009).

Benefits that may come from correcting the over taxation of non-residential lands are outlined by Kitchen (2002) in a chapter on the incidence and efficiency of property taxes. He states that the reduction in relative property tax burden would reduce the potential for exporting the property tax to non-residents and the distortion between investments in real property versus production. In addition, property tax for non-residential and employment land uses could be corrected further if the use of exemption of specific properties was terminated. Ultimately, Kitchen (2002) argues that this correction would improve overall efficiency gains and allocation of resources in the Canadian economy. Unless property taxes reflect the differential benefits that different land types experience, there would not be fairness in the distribution of rates (Kitchen, 2002; Kitchen, Slack & Hachard, 2019).

The large difference in taxation among residential versus non-residential lands is also reflected in the GTA at various rates. Wide variations in taxation rates across municipalities can cause businesses to locate where they will produce the most revenue while aspects like skilled labour, transportation access, and capital may also take priority. This is problematic because it leads to inconsistencies among provincial, regional, and local land-use planning policies (Bird, Slack & Tassonyi, 2012). In the same way, the distortions in the property tax system work against planning objectives (smart growth initiatives in employment land corridors, for example) (Slack, 2002). U.S. cities, for example, have addressed this issue by taking steps to provide for a predictable and affordable supply of employment lands to attract investment (Speer, 2020).

Prior to the property tax reform in Ontario, residential property tax rates were required to be 85% of the non-residential property tax rate. Today, the reform has proved to change the complexity of the administration of property tax and has not addressed many equity or fairness issues. While the residential property tax system has moved towards a market value system, the assessment of industrial and employment land properties has been frozen at pre-reform levels (Slack, 2002). It seems as if the tax reform was intended to maintain the rates at which non-residential uses carried the proportional bulk of tax burdens.

## Land Needs Assessment Methodology/Supply and Demand of Employment Lands

As described above, various organizations of property tax schemes attempt to create the most equitable redistribution of wealth with varying degrees of success. Another factor that should be considered when looking at Employment Areas and their role within an urban economy is the Land Needs Assessment Methodology. Since Employment Areas currently contribute heavily to the tax base of municipalities in Ontario, the assessment methodology is pivotal when considering municipal budgets.

The Land Needs Assessment Methodology was released by the Province to offer guidance on determining long-term land use needs in the context of the Greater Golden Horseshoe. It is organized into two categories: Community Areas and Employment Areas. For the purpose of this report, I will be discussing the process of determining Employment Area land needs. The assessment is based on employment growth forecasts from the Growth Plan and is then categorized by rural-based jobs, population related jobs, employment land jobs, and major office jobs. The population-related jobs, employment land jobs, and major office jobs are then allocated to Community Areas and Employment Areas. Next, the Community Area job growth is allocated into Greenfield and Delineated Built-up Area jobs. The calculation of the minimum number of jobs in Employment Areas is achieved by adding existing Employment Area Jobs with the forecasted job growth potential. Lastly, Employment Area land needs are achieved by dividing the Employment Area Jobs that are not accommodated in existing Employment Areas with newly developing Employment Area density projections (Province of Ontario, 2017). The Employment Area land need is combined with the Community Area land need to conclude the total land needed for the study area. Municipalities and regions hire consultants to formulate this land needs analysis to determine the rate of retainment or conversion of Employment Areas.

### Conversion Criteria

In a two-tier system, the upper tier is required to determine the employment strategy and the distribution of the tax burden among the property classes. In this case, this would include municipalities like Vaughan and Markham, for example. The Region is also responsible for formulating an Employment Strategy to assess current and future employment composition, delineate employment areas in the Regional Official Plan, establish minimum density targets for

employment areas, and identify opportunities for intensification. A report from the Region regarding proposed Employment Area Conversion Criteria outlines five core principles that will guide conversion decisions that align with Provincial and Regional policies (Regional Municipality of York, 2018).

The cities that have developed employment land conversion criteria that compliment the PPS and GP are Ottawa, Toronto, Mississauga, Burlington, Hamilton, and Milton. The Region has proposed Employment Area conversion criteria in a report from March 7, 2019. This is reflective of the City of Toronto's conversion criteria as they are both set within the provincial planning policy regime while the Region identifies the Growth Plan criteria as being too general regarding proximities to 400-series highways and supply of large parcels. In addition, the report outlines five core principles that would be addressed to summarize the proposed conversion criteria for York Region (Regional Municipality of York, 2019):

1. **Supply** – the preservation of an adequate and diverse supply of lands to meet regional and local long-term employment projections. This expands on the Growth Plan by protecting large parcels, vacant areas, and areas that were recently designated as Employment Areas. These criteria look beyond the 2041 planning horizon.
2. **Viability** – The operation of the employment area will be successful in the long term. The Region's criteria prohibit the consideration of requests by land uses that are to remain designated for employment purposes.
3. **Access** – The protection of sites within proximity to major highways, rail yards and airports. Like the City of Toronto, the Region's criteria would consider the location of the site in proximity to corridors that are important for goods movement purposes and other major transportation infrastructure where the Growth Plan does not expand on this.
4. **Infrastructure** – In addition to the Growth Plan's criteria of ensuring the availability of existing infrastructure (sewer, water, energy, transportation, public services), the Region's criteria emphasizes the importance on "high quality" public services and infrastructure systems.
5. **Region-wide Interests** – The proposed criteria in addition to those set out in the Growth Plan must consider whether the conversion request would compromise the local or regional planning objectives. This is important in the Region since there are many potential issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries

These criteria are reflective of some of the aspects of the metrics that can measure successful and efficient Employment Areas as identified in the literature review. Interests of the Region and local municipalities are met while conforming to the policy that Employment Areas are set within. While these criteria outline public sector interest, it may also be of interest for municipalities to reflect on the market context at varying degrees (local, regional, and national) and existing status of industrial or manufacturing firms in the evaluation of parcel level conversions.

# Land Use Policy Context

## Provincial Policy Statement, 2020<sup>5</sup>

Within the past two decades, the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) has taken on a provincial responsibility in protecting vital employment lands throughout the province. The PPS defines Employment Areas in section 1.3 as “. . . those areas designated in an official plan for clusters of business and economic activities including, but not limited to, manufacturing, warehousing, offices, and associated retail and ancillary facilities.” Some of these uses (e.g. manufacturing and warehousing) have potential to be incompatible with surrounding uses. While section 1.2.6.1 promotes long-term operational and economic viability of major facilities, 1.2.6.2 describes a basis on which planning authorities should permit the development of sensitive uses (not explicitly) in Employment Areas:

(1) there is an identified need for the proposed use; (2) alternative locations for the proposed use have been evaluated and there are no reasonable alternative locations; (3) adverse effects to the proposed sensitive land use are minimized and mitigated; and (4) potential impacts to industrial, manufacturing or other uses are minimized and mitigated.

Regarding Employment Areas, section 1.3.2.1 states that “Planning authorities shall plan for, protect and preserve employment areas for current and future uses and ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs.” This is further explored later in this paper by analyzing employment and population forecasts, employment trend reports, and infrastructure alignment reports.

Furthermore, section 1.3.2.2 states that “Planning authorities may permit conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses through a comprehensive review, only where it has been demonstrated that the land is not required for employment purposes over the long term and that there is a need for the conversion.” A later section of this report will analyze planning staff’s decisions on employment land conversion applications that follow this policy statement.

In the context of PSEZs, section 1.3.2.5 states that “lands within existing employment areas may be converted to a designation that permits non-employment uses provided the area

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<sup>5</sup> This version of the PPS is to go into effect May 1, 2020 and was issued under section 3 of the *Planning Act*. It replaces the PPS issued in 2014.

has not been identified as provincially significant through a provincial plan exercise or as regionally significant by a regional economic development corporation working together with affected upper and single-tier municipalities. . .” Additional criteria for conversion is as follows:

There is an identified need for the conversion and the land is not required for employment purposes over the long term; (2) the proposed uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area; and (3) existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities are available to accommodate the proposed uses.

Additional policy discusses protecting employment areas in adjacency to *major goods movement facilities and corridors*. There is also the suggestion of authorities planning beyond the 25-year horizon as long as they are not designated beyond those of area specific planning horizons (1.1.2).

In relation to infrastructure alignment, the PPS outlines smart growth policies regarding transit oriented development (TOD). Section 1.1.3.3 states that “Planning authorities shall identify appropriate locations and promote opportunities for transit-supportive development, accommodating a significant supply and range of housing options through intensification and redevelopment where this can be accommodated taking into account existing building stock or areas, including brownfield sites, and the availability of suitable existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities required to accommodate projected needs.” This policy directly relates to the case study in vicinity of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre in the sense that it has developed increasingly from a low density employment area, is along designation a Regional Intensification Corridors, and is expected to/have undergo major transportation infrastructure investments.

## Growth Plan, 2019<sup>6</sup>

The planning horizon for the GP is 2041<sup>7</sup> as per section 1.1.2 of the PPS. It is stated that authorities may also plan beyond this horizon if the long-term protection of employment areas is not already considered. There is also emphasis on the coordination of efforts across municipalities regarding economic growth in areas where PSEZs and investments in infrastructure are/will be made (2.1). This is encouraging since past reports have stated that the

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<sup>6</sup> This version of the GP has gone into effect as of May 16, 2019 and was approved under the Places to Grow Act, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> See [Appendix D](#)

GPs focus has been largely on managing residential growth and that there has been little evidence included on the evolving economy of the region (Blais, 2015).

Section 2.2.5 outlines the responsibilities and direction that authorities shall take in regards to Employment. Section 2.2.5.1 states that economic development and competitiveness in the GGH will be promoted by “making more efficient use of existing employment areas and vacant and underutilized employment lands by increasing employment densities.” This statement calls for a specific criteria that defines efficient and underutilization. Furthermore, section 2.2.5.9 of the GP states that the conversion of employment areas to non-employment uses may be permitted provided that the following criteria is met:

- (1) there is a need for the conversion;
- (2) the lands are not required over the horizon of this Plan for the employment purposes for which they are designated;
- (3) the municipality will maintain sufficient employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth to the horizon of this Plan;
- (4) the proposed uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area or the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets in this Plan, as well as the other policies of this Plan; and
- (5) there are existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to accommodate the proposed uses.

The GP (2019) has introduced a policy that will allow consideration of conversions of employment lands to non-employment uses outside of the MCR process, on specified policy grounds (initiated by the municipality), provided that the lands are not PSEZs. PSEZs are considered to be a modernized employment area designation system that ensures lands used for employment are appropriately protected while unlocking land for residential development.<sup>8</sup> Section 2.2.5.10 outlines the conversion criteria for the process of pre-MCR conversion application evaluation:

- (1) satisfy the requirements of policy 2.2.5.9 a), d) and e) (1, 4 & 5 as stated above);
- (2) maintain a significant number of jobs on those lands through the establishment of development criteria; and
- (3) not include any part of an employment area identified as a provincially significant employment zone.

PSEZs may be provided with specific direction from the Minister for planning and implemented appropriately through official plan policies and other strategies. Under the policies for implementation and interpretation, it is stated that the Minister will update, identify, or establish PSEZs as appropriate (5.2.2, 5.2.2.3). Generally, as opposed to policy makers,

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<sup>8</sup> Environmental Registry of Ontario 013-4504

people from industry, business and planning sectors gave positive comments regarding PSEZ regulations.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, upper- and single-tier municipalities in consultation with lower-tier municipalities will set minimum density targets for employment areas within settlement areas (2.2.5.13). This is related to the intensification goals set out by municipalities in York Region along intensification corridors, MTSAAs, and active transportation/other investments in designated employment areas. Section 2.2.4 outlines criteria for the creation of Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAAs). MTSAAs are located along the priority transit corridor (Highway 7) that runs through the case studies in this paper.<sup>10</sup> These are locations where employment land conversions may be addressed by municipalities and the Region to be appropriate since section 2.2.4 states that “Lands adjacent to or near to existing and planned frequent transit should be planned to be transit-supportive and supportive of active transportation and a range and mix of uses and activities.” In addition to general intensification targets and the boundaries of MTSAAs being a justification for conversion, the province may determine the timeline for implementation of these terms of these planning decisions (section 2.2.4.7). This may enable municipalities to be sure that employment intensification occurs appropriately where other sensitive uses are built on the same site.

## A Place to Grow and Employment Lands

To expand on the policy described above, PSEZs are to be crucial in the future economic growth and investment in the Province and it is important that the benefits of land use planning as well as existing and future investments in infrastructure are maximized so that municipalities are leveraged to deal with future economic change. It is believed that this one-time municipally-initiated window to receive conversion applications outside of an MCR would achieve an optimization of future infrastructure investments. Sean Speer of the Munk School of Policy analyzes Ontario policy reforms that are aimed at improving the investment climate of the Province and part of his recommendations address the proposed framework of the new PSEZ designation. The background reports discussed in later sections of this paper include the review of supply and demand of employment lands and align with the recommendation that the designation characteristics of PSEZs need to be strategically monitored and modified accordingly (Speer, 2020).

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<sup>9</sup> Environmental Registry of Ontario 013-4504

<sup>10</sup> See [Appendix E](#)

Evidently, under the new GP, there has been a renewed emphasis on the protection of employment lands alongside increased housing supply that reflects in part the Province's *Housing Supply Action Plan*. Some critics of preserving large tracts of land for employment uses state that it is unnecessary due to structural economic changes in consideration of housing affordability challenges. In addition, there is concern that PSEZ designations will further residential residential sprawl and hinder industrial investment that it is looking to attract (Gray, 2019). On the other hand, policy experts Paul Boothe and David Moloney state that the control of employment land use conversions at the Provincial level in coordination with regional and local municipalities may improve external investment interest (Boothe and Moloney, 2016). Additionally, The Neptis Foundation has stated that employment land conversion is best informed by a regional perspective as the economic nature of employment has implications beyond municipal boundaries (Blais, 2018).

While it is uncertain of the outcomes of this policy, the GP enables the government to review and update PSEZ and it is recommended that a regular review process of the supply and demand of employment lands every one to three years be established (Speer, 2020). There will be an evaluation of the PSEZ designation and will be addressed in the next MCR (Regional Municipality of York, 2019). In addition to the regularly updated economic outlooks and inventory of employment lands, there will need to be an analysis of the potential effects that automation and knowledge-intensive industries, for example, will have on the demand for industrial floor space (Blais, 2018).

## York Region Official Plan<sup>11</sup>

The Region of York is currently undergoing a MCR and this section is dedicated to the current state of the Region's official plan based on the timing of this research paper. A key element of the YROP includes focusing on Regional Centres and Corridors and the protection of employment lands from non-employment uses. Additionally, part of York Region's triple bottom line objectives involves balancing job creation with population growth, retaining and attracting highly skilled labour, promoting economic diversity and resilience, and delivering context sensitive and efficient infrastructure. All of these components give justification for the content of this research paper.

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<sup>11</sup> Based on the Official Plan (YROP-2010) Office Consolidation that includes decisions and amendments to April 2019.

Regarding employment lands, there are areas designated as “strategic employment lands” in the YROP.<sup>12</sup> The conversion of employment lands is not permitted and conversion is only to be considered during the MCR (4.3.9, 8.3.8), which will now change due to recent GP amendments regarding lands outside of PSEZs. The YROP calls for local municipalities to create employment land conversion policies in their OPs and secondary plans that are consistent with Regional and Provincial policies (4.2.10). Additionally, the Region requires local municipalities to determine the location, amount and size of ancillary uses that support employment land functions and that they be limited to 15% of an employment area (4.2.11, 4.2.12). Uses that are not permitted on employment lands include major retail and other retail, residential, and commercial non ancillary uses (4.3.8, 4.4.6).

Development along local intensification corridors and other major streets within employment lands are to be directed by the OP and secondary plans of the local municipality with appropriate zoning provisions and other requirements (4.3.13, 5.4.6). In addition, employment land development is to be designed to be both walkable and transit accessible where possible (4.3.15, 5.2.8)<sup>13</sup>. The YROP also encourages a balance of residential and employment uses to be provided throughout the Region to improve possibilities and opportunities of live-work situations through zoning flexibility and accommodations in comprehensive secondary plans for new employment areas (4.3.14, 5.2.5, 5.2.6). This includes uses of combined residential and business or personal services, office uses and home occupations (5.2.6). Additional policy states that complete communities are encouraged through a This seems to create a conflict with policies in the previous paragraph.

On fully services employment lands, development is to be compact and achieve a density of 40 jobs per hectare in the developable area and even higher where lands are adjacent to centres and corridors with encouragement and collaboration from the Region, local municipality, related agencies and the development industry (4.3.16, 4.3.21, 5.4). Other development requirements include a variety of lot sizes and street patterns that ultimately allow for redevelopment and intensification (4.3.17, 4.3.18). Opportunities for the intensification of employment lands are to be monitored on a 5-year basis by the Region and the local municipality (4.3.20). Furthermore, Key Development Areas are to be identified by local municipalities along regional intensification corridors to encourage a comprehensive approach to intensification (5.4.34). The density target for these developable areas is 2.5 FSI or

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<sup>12</sup> York Region Strategic Employment Lands are delineated in [Appendix F](#). These areas were added to the PSEZ map except for the lands located to the north of the city along highway 400.

<sup>13</sup> A map of York Region’s transit network can be found in [Appendix G](#).

otherwise defined by the Region and local municipality (5.4.33).<sup>14</sup> In regards to goods movement, the Region states that it is crucial that employment lands surrounding major goods movement corridors be reserved to mitigate the effect they have on other sensitive land uses.

To conclude, the YROP manages employment areas on the premise of long-term protection and high quality design at a high level with policies that aim to (Regional Municipality of York, 2019):

- Ensure a sufficient supply of employment areas
- Protect, maintain, and enhance the long term viability of employment areas by requiring that employment areas are designated and protected in local municipal official plans for employment area uses
- Limit ancillary uses (retail and commercial uses servicing the needs of the employment area) to a maximum of 15 percent of an employment area
- Encourage intensification and higher density employment uses, particularly in centres and corridors
- Direct municipalities to establish criteria for conversion of employment areas to non-employment uses

## Municipal Comprehensive Review and Employment Areas

Currently, York Region is undergoing its MCR.<sup>15</sup> The MCR includes the input of background and direction reports that include the topics of: intensification, employment, housing, infrastructure alignment, complete communities, climate change, and natural heritage and agriculture systems. For the purpose of this research paper, an analysis of the background and direction reports regarding intensification and employment was conducted alongside the Region's employment strategy. These components in combination with growth management reports and consultation and engagement will result in the updated YROP. At the time of this paper, growth forecasts, land needs assessments, and fiscal impact analysis had not been completed.

One of the major changes to the GP include the requirement of the Region to identify employment land designations in their OP. Regarding these designations, the Region has advised that they are considering two options for this mapping: local municipality determined

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<sup>14</sup> For density and height numbers on the VOP map along Highway 7 see [Appendix H](#).

<sup>15</sup> The structure of the York Region MCR review process can be found in [Appendix I](#).

land use and the two-tiered approach with one tier restricting uses and the other being more flexible with land use permissions (Regional Municipality of York, 2019). The Region released two reports regarding planning for intensification and planning for employment. York Region's background reports are built upon what was discussed in the market context section of this paper and give policy considerations for the policy recommendations that are expected later this year.

Regarding employment intensification, the region has set out guidelines for municipalities in determining potential areas for higher density. Furthermore, an intensification strategy report is expected to be released later this year with local municipality intensification targets to 2041. For assessing corridor densities, there are 9 major transit corridors that were identified with the Highway 7 BRT being the applicable one for our case study. There are three applicable MTSA designations along this corridor that include MTSA delineations. These are: Concord, Keele and Creditstone with densities of 160, 160, and 300 jobs and people/hectare respectively. According to the drafted MTSA policies, the applicable employment areas are anticipated to experience redevelopment at higher densities but are still not permitting a mix of land uses. These areas are expected to be developed with appropriate zoning, design guidelines, and built form transition in collaboration with local municipalities. In addition, MTSA delineations will connect with adjacent MTSA's to include much of the intensification corridor (Regional Municipality of York, 2019).

Regarding planning for employment, it is once again emphasized that the protection of employment areas is important so that they are to accommodate a diverse range of industries in a variety of building types. They are also particularly important for supporting smaller businesses and the Region's entrepreneurs because of lower land costs and rental rates in these areas (Regional Municipality of York, 2019). An increase in conversions in these areas will drive up land values and rents. This poses a challenge for the Region in avoiding displacement of businesses while allowing for more flexible development along its corridors within employment areas.

The Region further identifies the intensification in employment areas with two typologies: intensification on existing built parcels (parcels where the vacant portion(s) have road access and vacant portions are >0.5 ha in size parcels that are >50% vacant) and intensification within existing space (parcels where the vacant portion(s) does not have road access and vacant portions are >0.25 ha). The Keele employment area currently has a density of 51 jobs/hectare.

## Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

This compares with the rest of the Region's employment areas as densities in 2018 were 70 jobs/hectare (including office) and 58 jobs/hectare (excluding office).<sup>16</sup>

**Table 4: Employment Area Density, 2013-2018**

	2013 (jobs/Ha)	2018 (jobs/Ha)
Density (including major office)	65	70
Density (excluding major office)	55	58

Source: York Region Planning and Economic Development

*Table 3 - Employment Area Density, 2013-2018*

(Regional Municipality of York, 2019)

From 2011 to 2017, 60 percent of employment growth was accommodated through intensification of the two types described with an additional area of 328 ha of intensification in employment areas being identified as of 2017 (Regional Municipality of York, 2019). These components will be important to consider when guiding the intensification of employment areas within employment lands.

While the Region emphasises the preservation of core employment areas, it is identified that a broader range of employment uses are being permitted in strategic locations (fringe of employment areas, centres, and nodes) in several jurisdictions. This is based on the anticipation that there will be a better integration of employment areas with adjacent non-employment uses while providing for amenities that serve the existing employment base. Additionally, other jurisdictions are identifying parcels for potential investments where they are in "transition" and support redevelopment. The future function of MTSA's within employment areas are expected to be designed with transit-supportive built form and attract new office development with financial incentives. MTSA's are to also integrate employment areas into existing centres and corridors with other other intensification areas and that employment areas within close proximity to 400-series highways are to be protected over the long-term due to the rising importance of highway access for warehousing and transportation industries (Regional Municipality of York, 2019).

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<sup>16</sup> A profile of the Keele employment area can be found in [Appendix J](#)

## Vaughan Official Plan<sup>17</sup>

As per provincial and regional policies described above, the Vaughan Official Plan (VOP) states that employment growth is being accommodated through a balance of intensification within mixed-use centres and through new development in Employment areas (1.5). Due to new policies in the GP, sections of the VOP related to the MCR process are expected to be amended where appropriate. This amendment will continue to further protect employment land in line with current measures (5-year MCR process) along Regional and Local Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas in the City of Vaughan, which is where a majority of the conversion applications are located. These conversion requests are made in anticipation of redesignating employment land for non-employment uses<sup>1819</sup>

One of the goals stated in chapter one of the VOP is to direct growth to “appropriate” places. In the context of employment, this is expected to be accommodated in a balanced way within mixed-use centres and through new development in employment areas (1.0). The targeted density for Employment Areas is 40 jobs per hectare across as per the YROP with lands adjacent to Intensification Areas expected to be higher (2.2.4.5). These intensification areas include Regional and Primary Intensification corridors with the identification of Key development areas along these corridors being defined only by their frontage on to the defined corridor unless stated differently in a secondary plan (2.2.5.9, 2.2.5.14). To support intensification and redevelopment in Employment Areas, the VOP encourages a range of parcel sizes, street patterns, and building design in these areas to allow for flexibility that attracts a variety of businesses (2.2.4.8, 5.1.2.3, 9.1.2.10). In addition, Regional and Primary intensification corridors in Employment Areas are stated to evolve over time for employment related-intensification as per land use designations (2.2.5.11, 2.2.5.12, 5.1.2.2) with office uses being developed where appropriate in Employment Areas (5.1.1.3, 5.1.2.2, 5.1.2.3, 5.2.2). Non-accessory office uses are to be excluded in some areas but directing office uses to develop adjacent to planned transit stations and highly visible and accessible sites such as the VMC (5.2.2, 5.2.2.2) while also permitting office uses along Intensification Areas along arterials and transit corridors in Employment Areas will help achieve the city’s intensification objective (5.2.2). More specifically, professional, service, scientific, and technical offices will be targeted to

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<sup>17</sup> Based on the Official Plan (VOP 2010) Office Consolidation that includes decisions and amendments to June 2019.

<sup>18</sup> A map of applicable conversion applications can be found in [Appendix C](#)

<sup>19</sup> A map of intensification areas (including regional intensification corridors in employment zones) can be found in [Appendix K](#).

facilities of up to 12,500 square metres per lot as per transit service, type of intensification area, and context (5.2.2.3). For example, accessory office uses will be permitted in Employment Areas while non-accessory office uses will be directed to the Prestige Employment (max 10,000 square metres) or Employment Commercial Mixed-Use designations (5.2.2.4). Furthermore, major retail uses of over 10,000 square metres are not permitted in Employment Areas and will be directed towards the VMC and other Primary Centres (5.2.3, 5.2.3.6).

The VOP addresses the advancement in manufacturing, industrial and warehousing sectors by encouraging a supportive environment for economic innovation, flexibility, growth, and competitiveness (5.2.1). Regarding the activity of these sectors, the VOP states that proposed non-employment uses in and within 500 metres of Employment Areas need to undergo appropriate environmental studies and land use compatibility reports at the expense of the applicant (5.1.2.3, 5.2.1.2). This ensures that Employment Areas will be able to evolve according to changing demands while also mitigating any potential development that may hinder such activity. These lands are also to support Vaughan's emergence as a leader in green industries (5.2.1.1, 5.2.1.3, 5.2.1.4, 5.2.1.5).

To further define the policy objectives of Employment Areas in Vaughan, these lands are further classified as General Employment, Prestige Employment, and Employment Commercial Mixed-Use (2.2.4.2).<sup>20</sup> A General Employment designation permits industrial uses including manufacturing, warehousing (but not a retail warehouse), processing, transportation, distribution, no outdoor storage, and any related accessory office and/or retail (<49% of the total GFA devoted to the primary use provided that the accessory retail uses not exceed 10% of the total GFA) (9.2.2.10). These designated lands are "characterized by low scale buildings with a variety of lot sizes to provide flexibility for attracting and accommodating a wide range of industrial and associated employment uses."

A Prestige Employment designation permits industrial uses including manufacturing, warehousing (but not a retail warehouse), processing, distribution uses located within wholly enclosed buildings, gas stations (according to 5.2.3.12), no outdoor storage, and any related accessory office and/or retail (<49% of the total GFA devoted to the primary use provided that the accessory retail uses not exceed 10% of the total GFA). The general design and location of this designation is to be as follows:

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<sup>20</sup> 2.2.4.2, 2.2.4.3, 2.2.4.4, and 2.2.4.6 are currently under appeal and information regarding the appealed policies and maps can be obtained from the City of Vaughan Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability Department

Prestige Employment Areas shall generally be located on arterial streets forming the edges of Employment Areas, and along 400-series highways, in order to: i. allow the areas to provide a transition between General Employment Areas and more sensitive land uses; ii. locate greater intensity uses on key transportation routes; and iii. provide locational opportunities for activities which require high visual exposure and an attractive working environment.

Non accessory office spaces of up to 10,000 square metre GFA are permitted with additional density considered where there are major intersections (e.g. arterial streets & 400-series Highways) or planned transit stations, for example. Regarding retail spaces, the GFA of one ancillary retail unit generally cannot exceed 185 metres squared with the total GFA to generally not exceed 20% of total overall GFA (or exceed 1,000 square metres) and located 200 metres from the intersection of two arterial or collector streets. In addition to the above criteria, Prestige Employment Areas “shall be characterized by . . . a variety of lot sizes should be made available in areas designated as Prestige Employment to provide flexibility for attracting and accommodating a wide range of employment uses” (9.2.2.11).

Employment Commercial Mixed-Use Areas are to support the City’s intensification objectives for Regional and Primary Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas. This designation permits different uses depending on whether or not it is in an intensification area. In intensification areas, office uses, hotels, cultural and entertainment uses, retail uses (<3,500 square metres) and gas stations. Outside of intensification areas permitted uses are the same but exclude hotels and have a maximum GFA for office uses of 12,500 metres squared. The general design and location of this designation is to be as follows:

Areas designated as Employment Commercial Mixed-Use are located along Regional Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas, Primary Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas or in Employment Areas abutting Major Arterial streets. This designation recognizes existing areas of predominately commercial uses within the Employment Area as of the adoption of this plan. Such areas are appropriate for non-residential intensification and make efficient use of existing or planned rapid transit and transit investment. These areas are planned to be developed with commercial buildings that allow for a variety of business uses to occur in close proximity to each other in order to assist the City in achieving its intensification objectives.

A focus of business activity and the most comprehensive concentrations of ancillary uses and amenities that serve the needs of the surrounding Employment Areas are encouraged to be located in the Employment Commercial Mixed-Use designation. These uses are to be included

in the calculation for the maximum amount of land dedicated to ancillary uses. In addition, lands within this designation are to have a minimum of 30% of the total GFA of all uses to consist of uses other than retail uses.

It is clear in the VOP that Employment Areas are to be protected in that their function as viable and un-fragmented areas for uses related to industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, and some office uses is not to be compromised with encroaching non-employment uses (2.2.4, 5.1.1.3, 5.1.2, 5.1.2.3). This includes the restriction of allowing any additional retail uses than that subscribed for employment areas (2.2.4.4, 2.2.4.6, 5.1.2.3) and that limited retail areas are to directly serve the day-to-day needs of surrounding employment uses and their employees (2.2.4.7). Further regarding the conversion of these lands, they are subject to policies and provisions of the Planning Act, the GP, PPS, YROP, and this OP and are to be conducted through an MCR and based on GP conversion criteria (2.2.4, 2.2.4.3, 2.2.4.6). These sections are expected to be amended as appropriate regarding recent updated Provincial plans (PPS, GP).

Additionally, the focus of intensification along corridors is appropriate in the sense that it utilizes existing transit and infrastructure investments (2.2.4.9, 2.2.4.10, 2.2.5.13). Specifically, the regional intensification corridor that is Highway 7 has received transit and infrastructure investment such as the Viva Rapid Transit and connects the VMC with other intensification areas in Vaughan and across York Region and is expected to accommodate mixed use or employment intensification (2.2.1.1, 2.2.5). Furthermore, these corridors are identified as Key Development Areas and will link and complement the planning for Primary and Local Centres (2.2.5).

According to the above policies, the intensification corridors within Employment Areas are to not be converted to maximum retail, residential, or other non-employment uses with office uses being developed in appropriate areas. Specifically, City staff recommend that the Highway 7 corridor (west Concord) not be converted from employment uses (OPA 660) and this gives reason to investigate conversion requests/regional comments for lands in this area. The following section outlines appropriate secondary plan policies related to primary and local centres in the context of the case study area.

## Secondary Plans and Other Area Specific Policies

The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is defined in the VOP as an “area of significant size that will comprise distinct development precincts including residential neighbourhoods, office districts, Employment Areas and mixed-use areas, all linked by a robust system of parks, public

squares and open spaces, including the Edgeley Pond and Black Creek system, and a fine-grain grid pattern of streets. Since much of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is undeveloped today, there is an excellent opportunity to require that it develops as a pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented place, providing a variety of housing options and diverse employment opportunities” (2.2.5.1-2.2.5.5). Additionally, the VOP states that goods movement is of concern in the context of the VMC and that the employment lands in context should have direct access to Provincial highways while limiting heavy truck traffic-generating uses near intensification areas (4.4.2, 4.4.2.5, 4.4.2.8).

The first phase of study for the VMC secondary plan “recommended that the bulk of the active industrial uses east of Jane Street, along and south of Highway 7, within the VMC, remain an Employment Area and also be addressed by Volume 1 of the OP” (1.0) In previous plans for the VMC, “OPA 663, which was approved in 2008, responded to rapid transit service on Highway 7 and introduced the Corridor designation, applied to former District areas straddling Highway 7 and Jane Street. A range of land uses was permitted in the Corridor, similar to those permitted in the Node, and transit-oriented minimum and maximum densities were established” (2.0).

Highway 7 is mentioned in this secondary plan as providing excellent road access and visibility to the VMC. The build out of the VMC is hoped to help transform Highway 7 into a transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly streetscape over time with the VIVA service on Highway 7 being upgraded to light rail in the future (3.0, 4.3.12). Based on this information from the VMC secondary plan, it is safe to assume that the Highway 7 corridor will be experiencing some form of intensification in the future.

Similarly, the Concord/GO Secondary Plan is defined by the VOP as a local centre be “designed and developed to implement appropriate transition of intensity and use to surrounding neighbourhoods, and/or separation from adjacent Employment Areas” (2.2.5.7). This secondary plan was approved in 2015 by the City and the Region and addresses the surrounding Employment Areas and previous Official Plan Amendments (e.g. OPA 660, 661, etc.). These studies conform with the VOP and expect Highway 7 to experience employment intensification while addressing their current conditions as future opportunities.

## Evaluation of Land Use Policies

Regarding the relative land utilization and employment density of case study lands along intensification corridors within employment lands, the City of Vaughan hired consultants to conduct a high level analysis. While other corridors (Highway 7 & Highway 427, Rutherford

Road West) show more potential for intensification due to lower employment densities and higher amounts of underutilized land (MDB Insight & Watson & Associates, 2019), the case study intensification corridors of Highway 7 Concord have received a higher amount of employment land conversion applications in the current MCR.<sup>21</sup>

The results of analysis of land use policy regarding industrial uses throughout the GTA, Vaughan is among the least restrictive. While there is less emphasis on accommodating office uses in Employment Areas,

manufacturing and warehousing/distribution is available

in both general and prestige

employment designations. Office

uses are strategically directed

towards the Employment

Commercial Mixed-Use Areas. This

compares to Brampton, Markham,

and Mississauga which have

specific areas for which office uses

are to be developed, for example

(MDB Insight & Watson &

Associates, 2019). Employment

Commercial Mixed-Use Areas

provide for areas of transition

between Employment Areas and sensitive uses. This limits retail and commercial activity in

Employment Areas and is generally more restrictive compared to other municipalities like

Brampton, Markham, and Mississauga. In addition, the specific size permissions for retail uses

are appropriate in limiting ancillary retail and does not undermine the function of Employment

Areas (MDB Insight & Watson & Associates, 2019).

VOP policies are clear in describing the role of Employment Areas as being lands that

can accommodate uses that cannot be accommodated elsewhere in the city. The preservation

of contiguous and viable Employment Areas is strong as the VOP places significance on

attracting large-scale and traditional industrial uses. The current VOP, however, does not

appropriately address the transition of employment areas in the context of knowledge-based

Table 20: City of Vaughan Intensification Corridors – Existing Conditions

Intensification Corridor	Underutilized Employment Lands (% by Area)	Vacant Employment Lands (ha)	Current Employment Density (Jobs/ha)
HWY 7 & HWY 427 Regional Intensification Corridor	32%	50.0	37
HWY 7 Concord Regional Intensification Corridor	17%	0.3	62
Jane Street Primary Intensification Corridor	5%	2.4	76
Primary Intensification Corridor	0%	0.0	67
Primary Intensification Corridor	0%	0.0	55
Rutherford West Primary Intensification Corridor	74%	0.0	28
Steeles Ave East Primary Intensification Corridor	0%	0.0	78
Steeles Ave & HWY 407 Primary Intensification Corridor	9%	0.0	127

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

Table 4 - City of Vaughan Intensification Corridors - Existing Conditions

(MDB Insight, 2019)

<sup>21</sup> see [Appendix C](#)

and tech economic trends. Brampton, Milton, Markham, and Mississauga OPs provide guidance in the transition of existing and newly planned Employment Areas in the face of employment trends.

## Problem Investigation

In this section, I will discuss the recent outcomes and the narratives of conversion applications on behalf of the applicant and York Region. I will propose policy considerations based on a comprehensive view of current background studies, external literature, case study policies and narratives of conversion applications that will formulate my final recommendations and analysis.

## Conversion Applications

Below is a discussion of conversion applications being considered in the current MCR within the case study context. The City of Vaughan has received a number of 30 applications that total a total gross area of 388 hectares. This is the highest amount of land in a municipality for the Region that is requesting conversion from Employment Area designations with 669 net hectares totaled for the Region. Applications for lands Keswick Business Park, Queensville, Highway 404 (ROPA 1), ROPA 3, and Highway 400 North (ROPA 52) are not being considered due to them being unable to fully develop. It is also important to note that these conversions may be declined in totality based on the premises that the VMC isn't fully built out and can further accommodate a majority of the content that is contained in these conversion requests. It is still justified to include these applications in consideration of future conversion requests where timing may be appropriate, however.<sup>2223</sup>

Due to the delay in timing, local council decisions have not been released for each one of the related applications. However, [Regional comments](#) have been found in various meeting agendas and related information can be drawn upon from related reports. Based on available communications and data related to conversion applications, I will be briefly discussing four properties that are within the case study area. I will outline the justification for conversion from the applicant for two conversion applications and a summary of the assessment and final recommendations from the Region for all four.

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<sup>22</sup> A chart in [Appendix L](#) contains highlighted cells in gray for lands located within proximity of the case study area.

<sup>23</sup> [Appendix C](#) contains a map of land conversion applications within the case study area.

1950 & 1970 Highway 7 (V1)

One application from Brookvalley Project Management Inc. for the properties known by the municipal addresses of 1950 & 1970 Highway 7 was accepted as the area is not designated as employment within the YROP. Furthermore, the property is located within the Concord GO secondary plan and is expected to accommodate mixed-use development as per the planning objectives outlined in the secondary plan. This development is reflective of the vision that the Region has for its Regional Intensification corridor and may be seen as a transitional development between the local centre of Concord GO and the adjacent Employment Area (Regional Municipality of York, 2020).

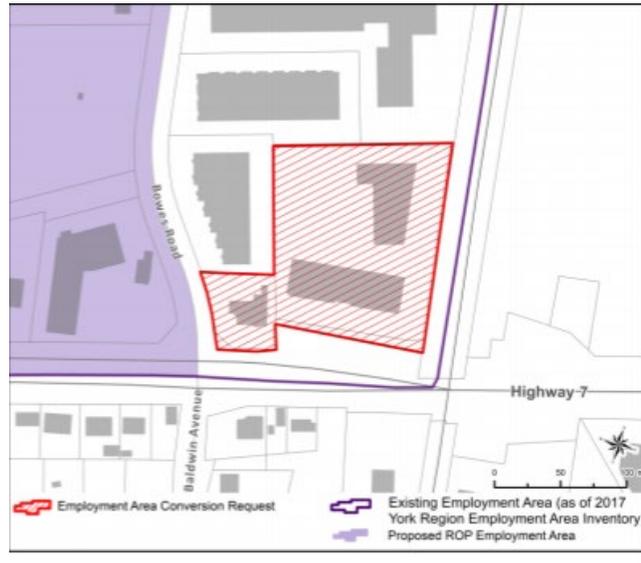


Figure 2 - 1950 & 1970 Highway 7 (V1)

(Regional Municipality of York, 2020)

2267 Highway 7 & 7700 Keele Street (V13)

The next application, and probably the most significant in the area, from KLM Planning is regarding the properties of 2267 Highway 7 & 7700 Keele Street. The applicant is looking to accommodate a mixed-use development and the site was not recommended for conversion by the Region. The Region’s comments include that the site is in close proximity to the CN MacMillan yard and that the properties are surrounded by traditional employment uses. The concern here is that there is potential for compatibility issues with the



Figure 3 - 2267 Highway 7 & 7700 Keele Street (V13)

(Regional Municipality of York, 2020)

surrounding function of the Employment Area due to noise, activity, and/or odour. In addition, the Region states that there are sufficient lands nearby that can accommodate non-employment uses and that the “lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses that will be assessed through the development of the Region’s employment policy framework” (Regional Municipality of York, 2020).

The February 21, 2019 response from KLM Planning regarding the PSEZ designation is that the subject site does not fit the criteria of the PSEZ designation (manufacturing and industrial activities) and that there is no relation to the rail yard. It was noted in the deputation that while rail spurs do access lands nearby, it does not service the subject lands. Furthermore, access is proposed from Highway 7 and Keele Street and would isolate traffic circulation problems from the activity of nearby Employment Areas (Regional Municipality of York, 2020).

In direct response to the Region’s comments from the recommendations on March 12, 2020, it is stated by KLM Planning that the subject lands are to be located within a future MTSA and that it is appropriate for mixed-use intensification and not employment designation. The existing low density residential that is to the east of the site would service a currently underserved residential area and that the subject site would increase on-site jobs from 128 to 1,029 through redevelopment. It is argued that the conversion and redevelopment of the site would support a complete community and that the subject site has already received zoning that permits 100% retail uses on the site and conforms to the criteria of the GP and the Region (Regional Municipality of York, 2020).

In addition, the applicant states that a consulting team concluded that without the residential units on-site, there would be no intensification or drive to increase employment and would not capitalize on the existing Highway 7 infrastructure investments which are both envisioned by the Region and the City of Vaughan. The area surrounding the site has had significant pedestrian-oriented improvements and is directly adjacent to the Keele BRT station on Highway 7. Also, the location of the subject lands is in between the VMC and Concord GO secondary plan areas which are two areas slated for major redevelopment (Regional Municipality of York, 2020).

#### 7777 Keele Street and 2160-2180 Highway 7 (V18)

This application is from MHBC Planning and the subject lands are known by the municipal address of 7777 Keele Street and 2160-2180 Highway 7. The nature of this conversion request is for the area to accommodate a mixed-use development on the site and

this was not recommended by the Region. Similar to the previous conversion application, the Region states that it is too close to the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses with the concern that there may be compatibility issues regarding noise, activity, and/or odour. In addition, it is stated that there are sufficient designated lands in the area to support non-employment uses in close proximity to the site and that the “lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses that will be assessed through the development of the Region’s employment policy framework” (Regional Municipality of York, 2020).

2104 Highway 7 (V26)

This application is from Weston Consulting and the subject lands are known by the municipal address of 2014 Highway 7. The nature of this conversion request is for the area to be converted to a mixed-use designation and this was not recommended by the Region. Similar to the previous conversion application, the Region states that it is too close to the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses with the concern that there may be compatibility issues regarding noise, activity, and/or odour. In addition, it is stated that there are sufficient designated lands in the area



Figure 4 - 7777 Keele Street & 2160-2180 Highway 7 (V18)

(Regional Municipality of York, 2020)



Figure 5 - 2014 Highway 7 (V26)

(Regional Municipality of York, 2020)

to support non-employment uses in close proximity to the site and that the “lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses that will be assessed through the development of the Region’s employment policy framework” (Regional Municipality of York, 2020).

## Analysis of Conversion Requests and Staff Comments

All but one applicable land use conversion applications in the chosen case study area were rejected on the basis of the conversion criteria in phase one of the process. This is reflective of the Regional employment land conversion criteria to be used in phase one of the evaluation process discussed earlier in this paper. Phase 2 of the evaluation process includes discussions with local municipal staff and stakeholders. There will also be a broader analysis regarding the changing nature of job delivery, implications on land budget and infrastructure, and consideration of the site within the local and Regional structure. It should be assessed if some employment areas should have more permissive uses and if they should be appropriate for mixed-use development as properties adjacent to rapid transit corridors may be considered (Regional Municipality of York, 2019).

An analysis of these conversion application recommendations must take into account that these properties are located within a Regional Intensification Corridor, drafted MTSA’s to be implemented in the near future, and the Provincial designation of PSEZ 10. It has also been stated in a deputation at the committee of the whole that the Highway 7 corridor should not be designated as a PSEZ (Regional Municipality of York, 2019). Regarding this matter, the Province has asked for feedback regarding the overlap of MTSA’s and PSEZ’s and the Region has stated that “MTSA’s without residential uses can exist in employment areas and provincially significant employment zones at transit supportive densities” (Regional Municipality of York, 2019)

Overall, there seems to be quite a disconnect between planning staff and consultants that are requesting for an employment land conversion. While the designation of Regional Intensification Corridors within Employment Areas support primarily commercial and knowledge-based (office) employment uses and discourage non-residential intensification (City of Vaughan, 2010), the development community proposes mixed-use development in these areas as shown in the conversion requests (Regional Municipality of York, 2020). This may be a matter of financial infeasibility in the development of stand-alone office developments along the Region’s corridors. Recent office development incentives that may be the solution to this are discussed briefly in the next section.

The justification for conversion with regards to MTSA needs to be further clarified in terms of density target and the share of jobs and people. The draft MTSA in this area are Keele (MTSA 14) and Concord (MTSA 15). While application V13 argued that a mixed-use development would work towards reaching the intensification target of 160 jobs and people/hectare, MTSA 14 shows that the share of people compared to jobs is to remain the same at 5% and 95% respectively. This share is to be maintained as the density in the area reaches 160 from 45 people and jobs/hectare. Application V1 contributes to the MTSA 15 target since the goal share is 50%/50% people and jobs/hectare where the share is currently 10%/90% people and jobs/hectare. Furthermore, this request is accurate due to the applicability to the density target of 160 from 20 people and jobs/hectare.<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately, further information regarding land needs assessment and other projections are required to conduct a comprehensive review of these applications. This was an argument on behalf of the applicant that was clearly valid from a planning perspective. While the phase 1 conversion criteria reflects employment and industrial area operation principles, there should be no final decision on employment conversion requests without a comprehensive analysis that is the land needs assessment. However, these conversion requests provide direct input for the Region's land needs assessment (Regional Municipality of York, 2019).

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<sup>24</sup> Information on the draft MTSA (14 & 15) can be found in [Appendix M](#).

# Recommendations and Final Analysis

## Conclusions from Literature and Policy Overviews

As a result of the review of literature on the topic of the intensification of employment lands, it has been identified that viable employment lands can experience externalities such as real estate market pressures, changing rental rates, and policy ineffectiveness. In addition, internal issues can arise with regards to restrictive zoning and other site-specific inefficiencies such as the employment land conversion process. In some metropolitan regions, these issues are largely due to smart growth policies that tend to over-simplify the nature of industrial lands and typically treat them as being places to accommodate residential and commercial intensification as investments in infrastructure occur.

In the context of the GTA, the review of Provincial and Regional policy and initiatives in the Region's MCR process show that there are increasing efforts in appropriately managing Employment Areas within the smart growth policy regime. The introduction of PSEZs into the Growth Plan 2019 shows that the Province is taking a more regionalized and nuanced approach in the management of Employment Areas and the process of their conversion.

At a local level, there needs to be more flexibility in Employment Areas, and as a result of this study, the City of Vaughan needs to incorporate more flexibility regarding employment activities in Employment Areas. Compared to other municipalities in the GTA, Vaughan provides the least restrictive Employment Area policies (warehousing/distribution and manufacturing in both General and Prestige designations) with office uses being strategically directed towards Employment Commercial Mixed-Use designations. While land use designations in the VOP describe Employment Area designations (General, Prestige, and Commercial Mixed-Use) as providing flexibility via a variety of lot sizes, use permissions regarding warehousing and GFA allotment for office space may need to be amended appropriately after an analysis of emerging industry needs and economic trends. These trends include the increasing demand for offices, flex-space, and employment spaces; medium-scale urban warehousing in close proximity to consumer markets; light manufacturing linked with consumer markets (food and beverage, 3D printing, etc.), and steady demand for suburban manufacturing and warehousing to support e-commerce (Blais, 2018).

To meet provincial and regional intensification goals regarding employment, it will be in the benefit of the municipalities of York Region to implement initiatives to assist firms to grow in

place. While there are many factors that determine where businesses locate (skilled labour, capital, property taxes, etc.), specific place-based strategies for intensification corridors within Employment Areas in York Region that build upon existing employment, intensification, and economic strategies would prove to be beneficial. This form of policy structure could build upon the recently proposed amendments to the 2017 Growth Plan that introduce PSEZs and MTSAs. Where these policies overlap provides an opportunity to implement programs in industrial corridors that stimulate the infrastructural, preservation, and economic development strategies that have proven to make industrial areas viable.

Chicago's Industrial Corridor Program offers a good example of how cities can implement a top-down policy approach for preserving and stimulating economic growth in industrial areas that is compatible with the vision of the Region. Zoning amendments that provide for flexibility and appropriate development standards where employment land intensification is to occur would aid in the accommodation of smaller and medium-sized businesses, start-ups, and the changing demands for industrial spaces in light of recent economic trends. Additionally, the Impact Fee system that is being studied in Chicago would potentially keep land values low and help retain businesses that make York Region's employment areas competitive and viable. A regular review of the appropriate policy choice for these areas would be required to ensure its effectiveness. Additional employment area TOD examples should be studied to determine best practices.

## Takeaways for Planners

After a review of several employment land conversion applications and the responses of the Region, it is clear that there is a misalignment between Region's vision and stakeholder comments for Regional Intensification Corridors within Employment Lands. It is also possible that, while the market deems the Highway 7 regional corridor as prime for redevelopment, it is not as financially feasible to develop only employment uses such as offices in the case study area. The proposal of mixed-use developments typically helps reduce financial risk for developers as pre-leasing office development may be difficult in this area due to surrounding competitive land markets such as the VMC, Markham Centre, and downtown Toronto. However, Regional and Provincial investments and projects such as regular two-way GO service, Highway 7 BRT service, and the Regional large office incentive program pilot for the Keele employment area will potentially develop the area into a complete community and make the area increasingly competitive.

A question that local municipalities, the Region, and the Province will have to address is: how can flexible policies where PSEZs and MTSA's overlap be written in a way that makes the vision of the local municipality and the Region predictable to all stakeholders? Area specific policies in the form of secondary plans or programs similar to Chicago's Industrial Corridors may provide for more predictability among private sector stakeholders.

Furthermore, the lands adjacent to the Regional Intensification Corridor designation should be preserved with their current employment and industrial use designations to avoid redevelopment with residential or retail uses. Further study in the Keele employment area regarding the transition and evolution of industrial areas by the Highway 404 and 407 node should occur as economic trends such as the increases in automation, e-commerce, urban-style amenities, and knowledge-based firms are changing the demand of how these spaces are used. The Region has taken steps to take inventory of vacant industrial land and identify opportunities of intensification. This initiative in combination with a parcel-level analysis and consultation on the potential pressures of conversion could help optimize their use in the new economy.

The question for planners is: how should the surrounding Employment Areas beyond Regional Intensification Corridors be fiscally and spatially managed by Regional and Provincial policy? A comprehensive plan for the Keele employment area would be beneficial in guiding development decisions that work towards a coordinated and planned Employment Area. This would ensure that impacts on existing nearby residential areas and the future Concord GO secondary plan area are mitigated and the function of the Keele employment area is optimized. Additionally, a comprehensive plan for the case study area would help achieve Provincial and Regional intensification targets regarding employment and residential development while guiding contextually appropriate development. Currently, local municipalities are undergoing their OP conformity exercise and will be working with the Region in identifying areas suitable for traditional employment and areas suitable for increased flexibility. The results of this will be included in the updated YROP (Regional Municipality of York, 2020) and would require regular updating to follow broader regional economic trends of the GGH over the coming decades. While overall growth numbers are positive, they can be misleading as it is important that areas of decline are identified.

For future consideration, it has been mentioned by councillor Jackson that the City of Vaughan would like to see MTSA designations along Jane Street. The Region's response is that funding for these stations is more secure and that they can be considered at the next MCR (Regional Municipality of York, 2020). Furthermore, this research could apply in the understanding of the intensification of Employment Areas along Jane Street, Rutherford Road,

Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

and additional areas to the west along Highway 7. This research could also apply to other intensification corridors in the municipalities that make up York Region.

## Conclusions

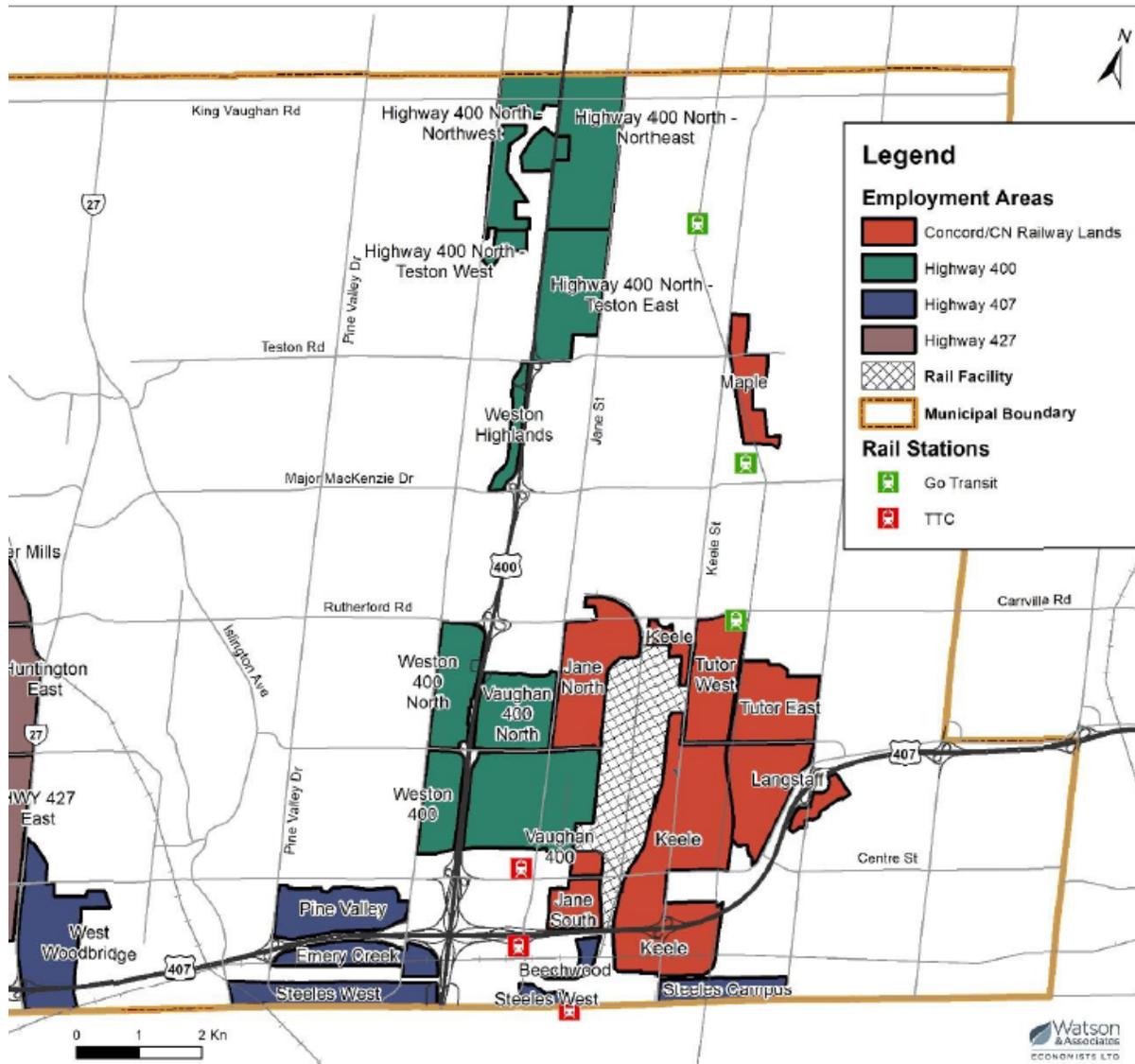
As the regional economy in Ontario shifts with knowledge and service-based industries dominating its growth and the pressure for municipalities to provide for more housing continues, there will and has been increasing pressure for the conversion of underutilized Employment Areas to accommodate sensitive land uses in proximity to infrastructure investments. Consequently, smart growth policies at the Provincial, Regional, and local municipal levels will need to address the role and function of employment areas appropriately. Recent introduction of PSEZs and MTSAs that apply to Employment Areas will require further consultation on behalf of the Province to determine how these areas can benefit from being tools for longer-term investment, infrastructure planning, and economic activity (Province of Ontario, 2020).

In regards to regional and local municipal policies, it is expected that they will be amended according to the new Provincial policy initiative within the year. After conducting a literature review, analyzing a U.S. case study, reviewing the applicable policies of a York Region case study, and reviewing conversion requests within this York Region focused case study, I have formulated policy considerations for managing industrial lands within intensification corridors. The policy language and direction needs to be clear to provide for predictability for the development community and needs to be consistent between local, regional, and provincial levels. Additionally, the interaction of PSEZs and MTSAs needs to be clarified and could potentially be framed in a way that gives the local municipality more autonomy in planning the intensification and potential conversion of their Employment Areas. It is important that local municipalities, the Region, and the Province continue to proactively support and market viable Employment Areas by all available means including financial and incentive programs for all industries, area-specific policy planning tools, and the preservation of viable employment lands.

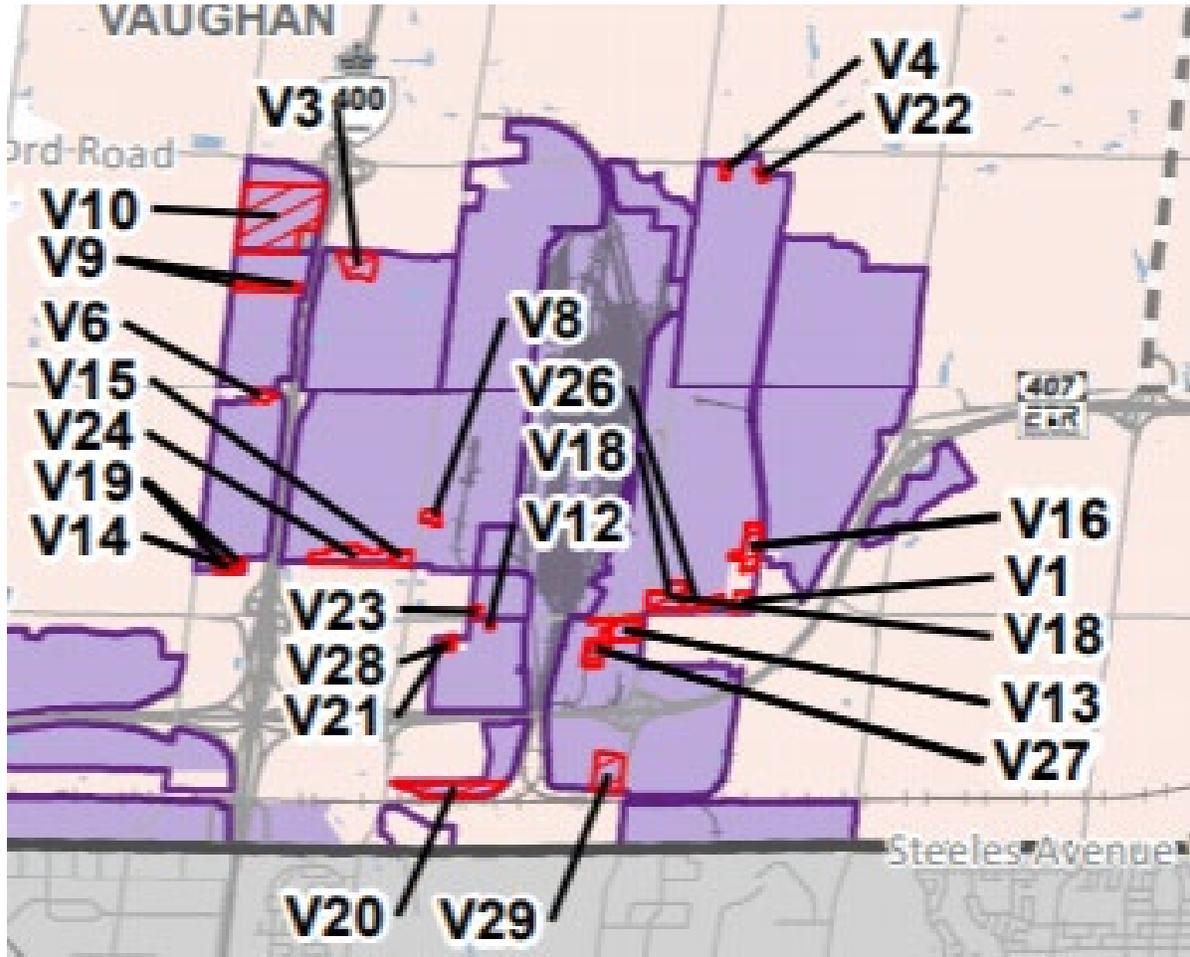
In light of the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the conclusions and recommendations from this paper may need to be re-visited in light of a changing land and employment market. Consideration of changing working situations (work from home), unemployment and hour reductions, and the deficits that municipalities are experiencing will need to be taken into account in discussing the intensification of Employment Areas.



## Appendix B - Map of Employment Areas in the City of Vaughan



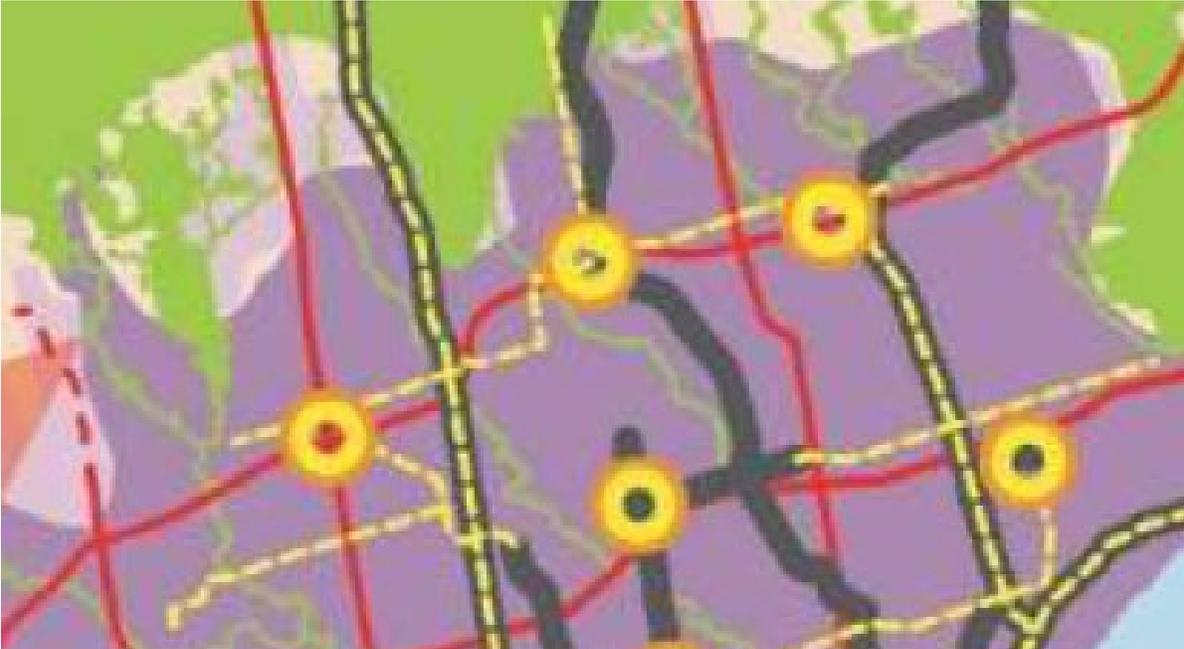
### Appendix C - Map of Employment Conversion Requests



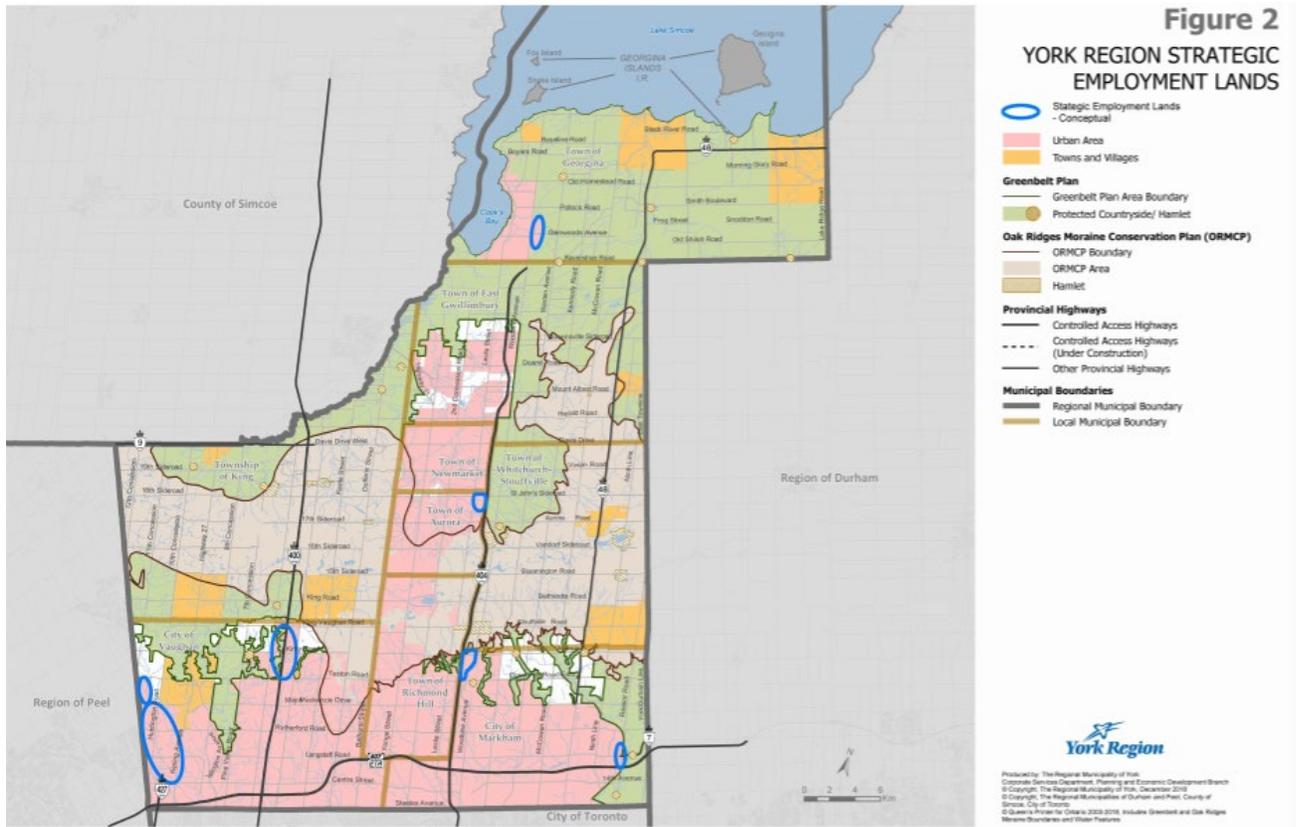
## Appendix D - Provincial Population and Employment Projections

<b>Distribution of Population and Employment for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2041 (figures in 000s)</b>						
	<b>POPULATION</b>			<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>		
	<b>2031</b>	<b>2036</b>	<b>2041</b>	<b>2031</b>	<b>2036</b>	<b>2041</b>
Region of Durham	970	1,080	1,190	360	390	430
Region of York	1,590	1,700	1,790	790	840	900
City of Toronto	3,190	3,300	3,400	1,660	1,680	1,720
Region of Peel	1,770	1,870	1,970	880	920	970
Region of Halton	820	910	1,000	390	430	470
City of Hamilton	680	730	780	310	330	350
<b>GTAH TOTAL*</b>	<b>9,010</b>	<b>9,590</b>	<b>10,130</b>	<b>4,380</b>	<b>4,580</b>	<b>4,820</b>

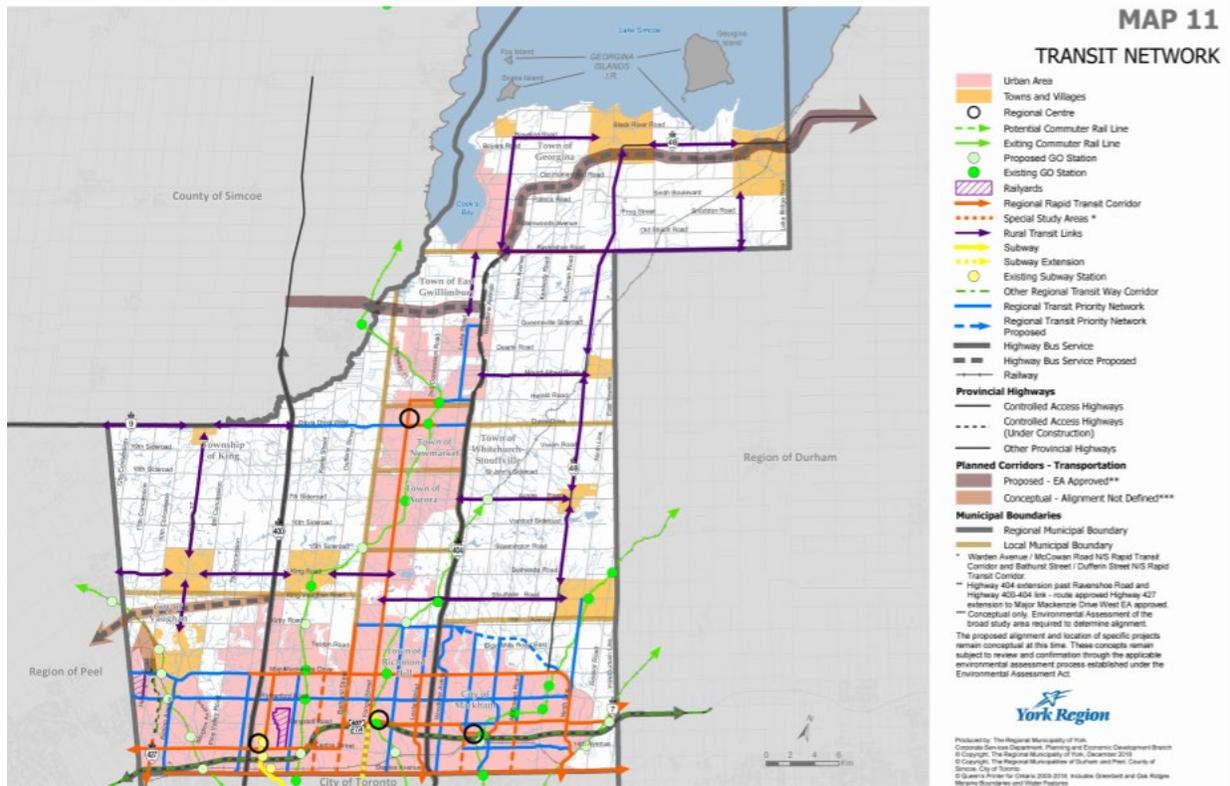
### Appendix E - A Place to Grow Concept Map



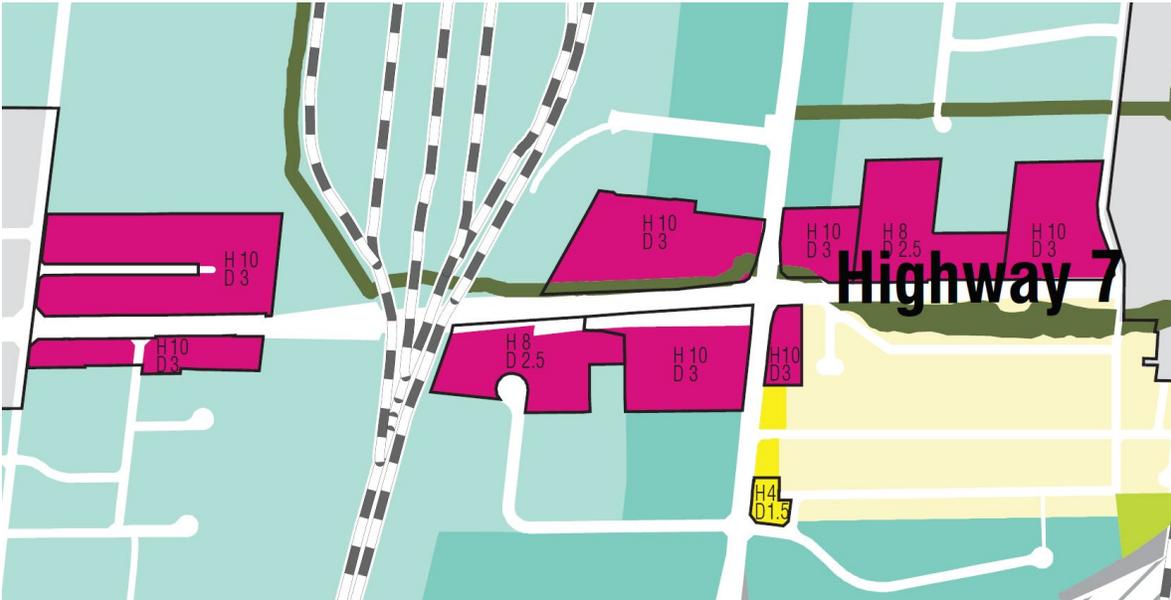
## Appendix F - Strategic Employment Areas in York Region



# Appendix G - York Region Transit Network

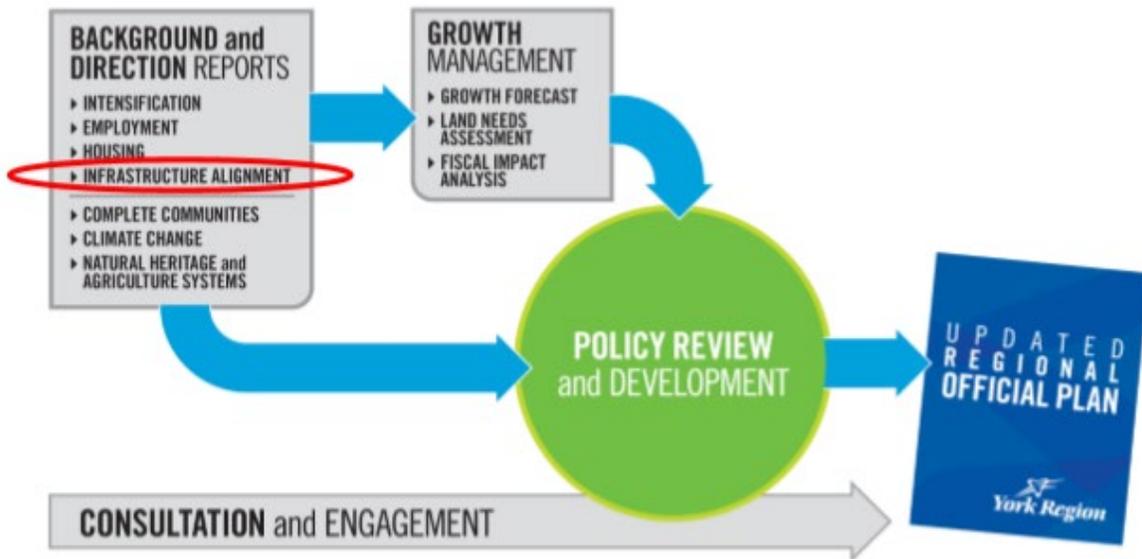


### Appendix H - Case Study Land Use Map

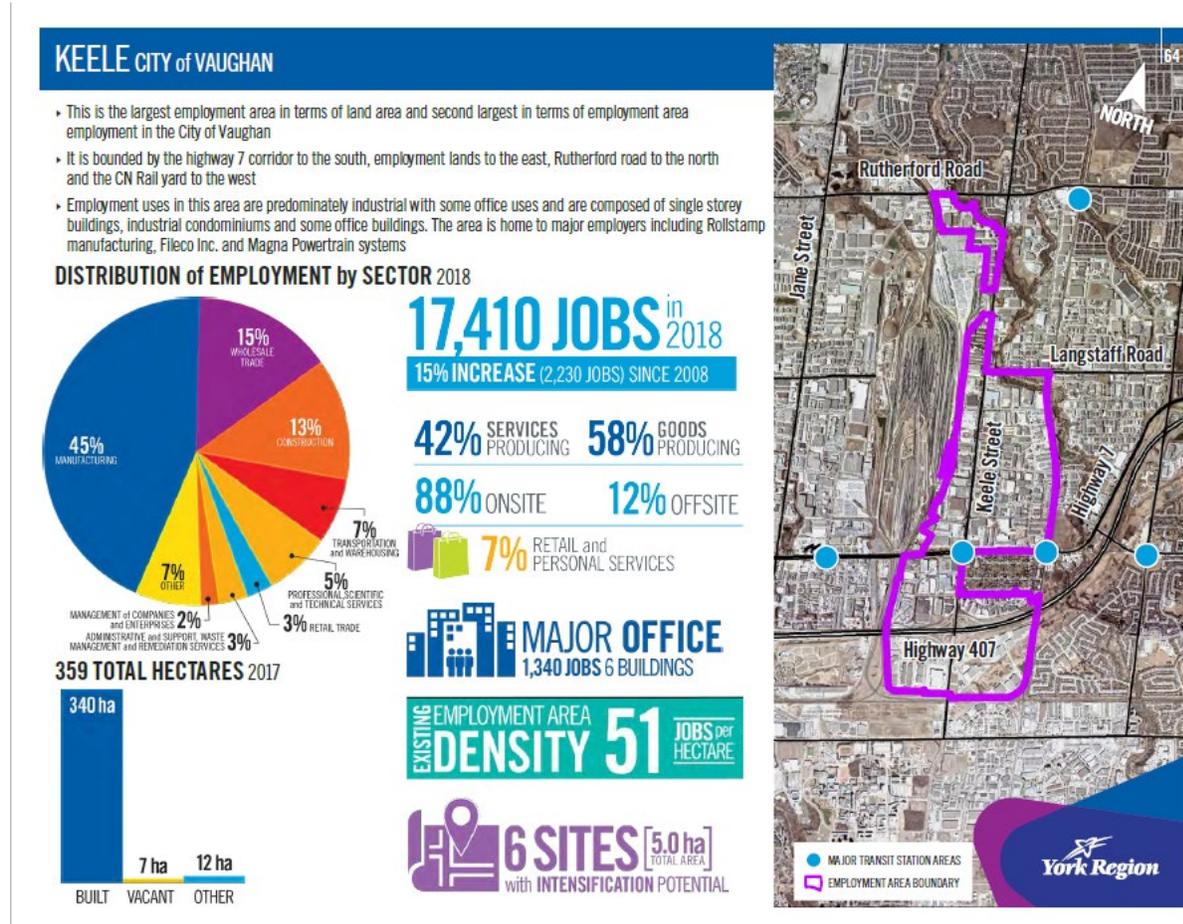


## Appendix I - York Region Municipal Comprehensive Review Components

**Figure 1**  
**Municipal Comprehensive Review Components**

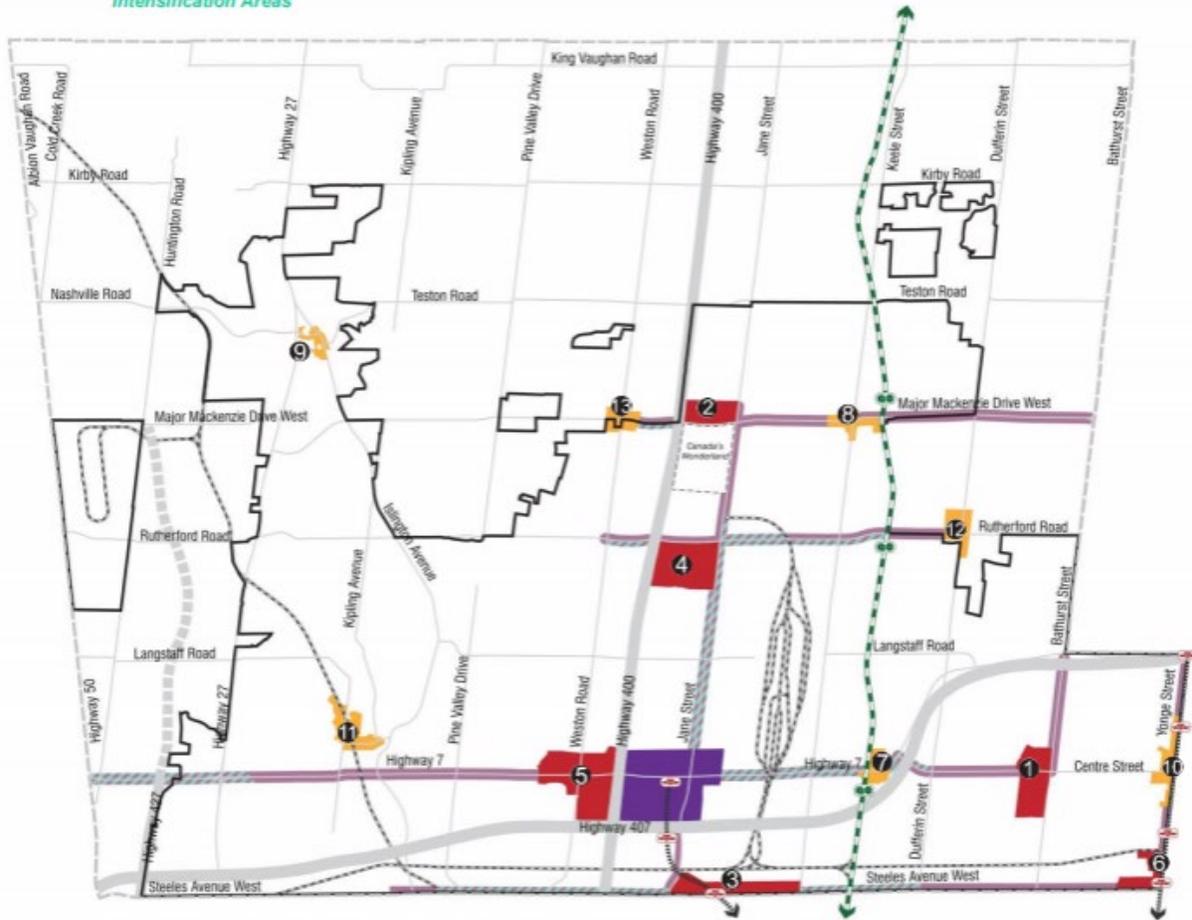


## Appendix J - Keele Employment Area Profile



## Appendix K - Intensification Areas in the City of Vaughan

Figure 6  
Intensification Areas



## Appendix L - Chart of Employment Conversion Requests

ID	Address	Nature of Request	Total Area (ha)	Communications	Summary of Assessment	Regional Recommendation
V1	45, 65, 85, 115 Bowes Road and 1950 and 1970 Highway 7, Vaughan	A request to re-designate lands from "Employment Commercial Mixed-Use" to "Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential".	2.1	X	- Conversion to non-employment uses supports the local municipal planning objectives of the evolving urban structure proposed through the Concord GO Secondary Plan.	Area not identified as employment in the Regional Official Plan. Designation at the discretion of the Local Municipality.
V2	11421 Weston Road, Vaughan	A request to re-designate lands to allow mixed-use permissions (including residential use) beyond employment uses permitted by the City of Vaughan OPA 637. The site is also located within the ROPA 52 area.	28.9			
V3	233 Four Valley Drive & 1040-1080 Edgeley Boulevard, Vaughan	A request to re-designate employment land to support mixed-use development on site.	5.9			
V4	11, 27 and 37 Jacob Keefer Parkway, Vaughan	A request to permit residential and/or commercial mixed use on the subject lands currently	1.0	X		

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		designated as "Employment Commercial Mixed-use" in the 2010 Vaughan Official Plan				
V5	7625 Martin Grove Road & 211 Woodstream Boulevard, Vaughan	A request to re-designate lands from employment uses to mid-rise mixed-use.	1.8			
V6	661 & 681 Chrislea Road, Vaughan	A request to re-designate subject lands from Employment use to High-Rise Mixed Use.	1.6			
V7	Block 34W and 35, Lots 26 through 35, Concession 5 and Lot 1 King Concession 5, Vaughan	A request to re-designate the subject lands from employment to residential uses. The site is also located within the ROPA 52 area.	292.3			
V8	8083 Jane Street, Vaughan	A request to re-designate lands from Prestige and General Employment to Mixed Use designation.	1.8			
V9	8821 Weston Road, Vaughan	A request to re-designate subject lands from Prestige Employment to Employment Commercial –	3.7			

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		Mixed use				
V10	Part of Lot 14 and 15, Concession 5, Vaughan	A request to re-designate the subject lands from employment to residential/ mixed-uses	39.2			
V11	6241 Rutherford Road, Vaughan	A request to convert employment lands from the current Prestige Employment designation to commercial/recreational mix land use	8.2			
V12	2739 Highway 7, Vaughan	A request to convert employment lands to allow residential uses	0.3	X	<p>- The site is in close proximity to the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses. Permitting non-employment uses could potentially introduce compatibility issues with surrounding employment uses. Sites in this area should be retained as employment as they require separation from sensitive uses including residential that are sensitive to noise, activity and/or odour.</p> <p>- There are sufficient designated lands to support non-employment uses in close proximity to the subject site.</p> <p>- Site should be maintained as employment but lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework.</p>	<p>Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan.</p>
V13	2267	A request to re-	5.5	X	- The site is in close proximity to	Not recommended for

Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

	Highway 7 & 7700 Keele Street, Vaughan	designate the subject lands to a mixed-use residential development			the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses. Permitting non-employment uses could potentially introduce compatibility issues with surrounding employment uses. Sites in this area should be retained as employment as they require separation from sensitive uses including residential that are sensitive to noise, activity and/or odour. - There are sufficient designated lands to support non-employment uses in close proximity to the subject site. - Site should be maintained as employment but lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework.	conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan.
V14	156 Chrislea Road & 15 Jevlan Drive, Vaughan	A request to allow greater flexibility in the permitted uses including more retail and service commercial type uses.	1.5			
V15	201 Millway Avenue, Vaughan	A request to re-designate lands from Prestige Employment to a mixed-use designation.	1.9	X	- Lands are part of a larger contiguous employment area and nonemployment uses would destabilize and/or adversely affect the overall viability of existing and/or future employment uses in the employment area - The conversion would impact a currently logical employment boundary. - Lands should be retained as employment as they provide an appropriate transition between the	Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan

Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

					employment area and the adjacent non-employment uses and may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework.	
V16	163 & 175 Bowes Road, Vaughan	A request to re-designate lands from employment use to a mixed use designation.	5.9		- Conversion to non-employment uses supports the local municipal planning objectives of the evolving urban structure proposed through the Concord GO Secondary Plan - The lands north of Oster Lane to be designated as employment in the Regional Official Plan. Lands south of Oster Lane to be designated at the discretion of the Local Municipality.	A portion of the area recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate remainder as employment in the Regional Official Plan.
V17	4600 Steeles Ave West, Vaughan	A request to re-designate "Employment Commercial Mixed Use" lands to facilitate mixed use development on site	3.0			
V18	7777 Keele St and 2160-2180 Highway 7, Vaughan	A request to re-designate "Employment Commercial Mixed Use" lands to facilitate mixed use development on site.	6.2		- The site is in close proximity to the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses. Permitting non-employment uses could potentially introduce compatibility issues with surrounding employment uses. Sites in this area should be retained as employment as they require separation from sensitive uses including residential that are sensitive to noise, activity and/or odour. - There are sufficient designated lands to support non-employment uses in close proximity to the subject site.	Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan.

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					- Site should be maintained as employment but lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework.	
V19	31 Jevlan Drive and 172 Chrislea Road, Vaughan	A request to broaden land permission to allow for a greater range of development opportunities on the subject lands.	1.0			
V20	7171 Jane St, Vaughan	Request that lands be redesignated from their current employment designation to a mixed-use designation permitting higher density residential and commercial uses.	9.9			
V21	140 Doughton Road, Vaughan	Request that the subject property be converted from the General Employment designation to the Station Precinct designation and the subject property be incorporated within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan boundary as	0.3		- Conversion to non-employment uses is reflective of the evolving local urban structure, will likely have minimal impact on adjacent employment uses and results in a more logical employment area boundary.	Area not identified as employment in the Regional Official Plan. Designation at the discretion of the Local Municipality

Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

		part of the ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review				
V22	676, 696 Westburne Drive	Allow for the re-designation of subject lands to allow for a mixed use high density residential development.	1.02			
V23	2780 Highway 7	A request to allow for the conversion of these lands from only employment generating purposes to also permit residential uses and the associated population to support transit infrastructure investment and so fulfill the intensification and complete community objectives of the Province, Region and City	0.75 ha		<p>- The site is in close proximity to the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses. Permitting non-employment uses could potentially introduce compatibility issues with surrounding employment uses. Sites in this area should be retained as employment as they require separation from sensitive uses including residential that are sensitive to noise, activity and/or odour</p> <p>- There are sufficient designated lands to support non-employment uses in close proximity to the subject site.</p> <p>- Site should be maintained as employment but lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework.</p>	Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan.
V24	705 Applewood Cres, 200/225/207 Edgeley Blvd, 10/11/27/38 Buttermill	A request to convert the employment lands to non-employment uses to recognize its location as a transitional area	7.54		- Site is part of a larger contiguous employment area, and the introduction of non-employment uses has the potential to destabilize the employment area and/or negatively impact viability of existing or future surrounding employment uses by putting	Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan

Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

	Ave, 190/212 Millway Ave	from the VMC.			pressure for future conversions in the adjacent parcels. - Lands should be retained as employment as they provide an appropriate transition between the employment area and the adjacent non-employment uses and may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework. - The conversion would impact a currently logical employment boundary	
V25	Part of Lots 4 and 5, Concession 9	Lands are currently designated Employment Commercial Mixed Use. Proposing to retain some employment area, and convert remainder to high density residential including eleven 35-storey residential towers	7.32			
V26	2104 Highway 7	A request to re-designate the subject lands to a mixed-use.	2.4 ha		- The site is in close proximity to the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses. Permitting non-employment uses could potentially introduce compatibility issues with surrounding employment uses. Sites in this area should be retained as employment as they require separation from sensitive uses including residential that are sensitive to noise, activity and/or odour. - There are sufficient designated lands to support non-employment	Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses. Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan

Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

					<p>uses in close proximity to the subject site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Site should be maintained as employment but lands may offer the potential for more permissive employment uses to be assessed through the development of the Region's employment policy framework.</li> </ul>	
V27	80, 82 & 220 Doney Crescent	A request to re-designate the subject lands to residential/mixed use. To be considered along with conversion request V13.	4.16 ha		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entire perimeter of the site is surrounded by lands designated for employment uses. The introduction of a non-employment use would destabilize and/or impact the existing and/or future viability of the employment area.</li> <li>- The site is in close proximity to the CN MacMillan yard and is surrounded by traditional employment uses. Permitting non-employment uses could potentially introduce compatibility issues with surrounding employment uses. Sites in this area should be retained as employment as they require separation from sensitive uses including residential that are sensitive to noise, activity and/or odour.</li> <li>- There are sufficient designated lands to support non-employment uses in close proximity to the subject site.</li> </ul>	<p>Not recommended for conversion to non-employment uses.</p> <p>Designate as employment in the Regional Official Plan.</p>
V28	130 Doughton Road	To re-designate from employment uses to a 'Station Precinct' designation to permit residential and major retail uses.	0.82 ha		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conversion to non-employment uses is reflective of the evolving local urban structure, will likely have minimal impact on adjacent employment uses and results in a more logical employment area boundary.</li> </ul>	<p>Area not identified as employment in the Regional Official Plan.</p> <p>Designation at the discretion of the Local Municipality.</p>
V29	7250 Keele Street	A request to permit greater	8.54 ha			

Running Head: Intensification of Employment Lands in York Region

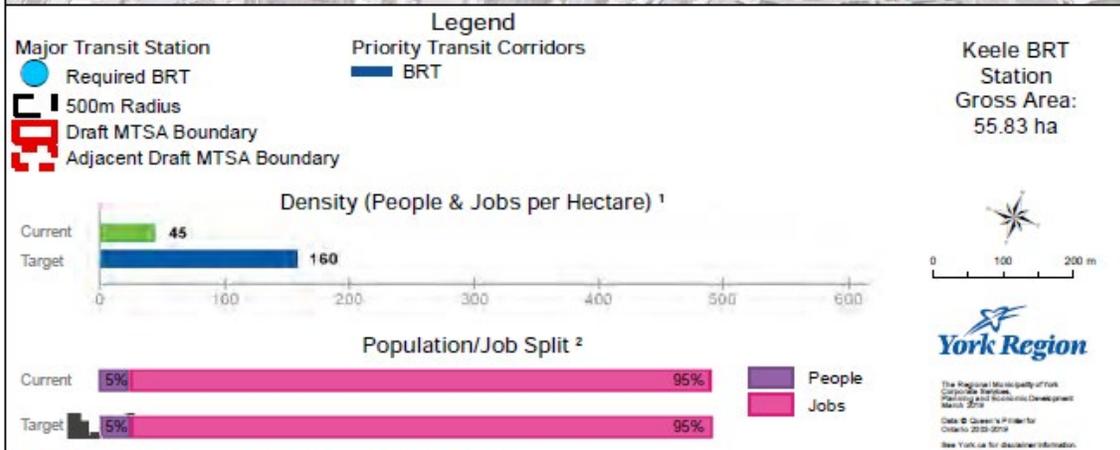
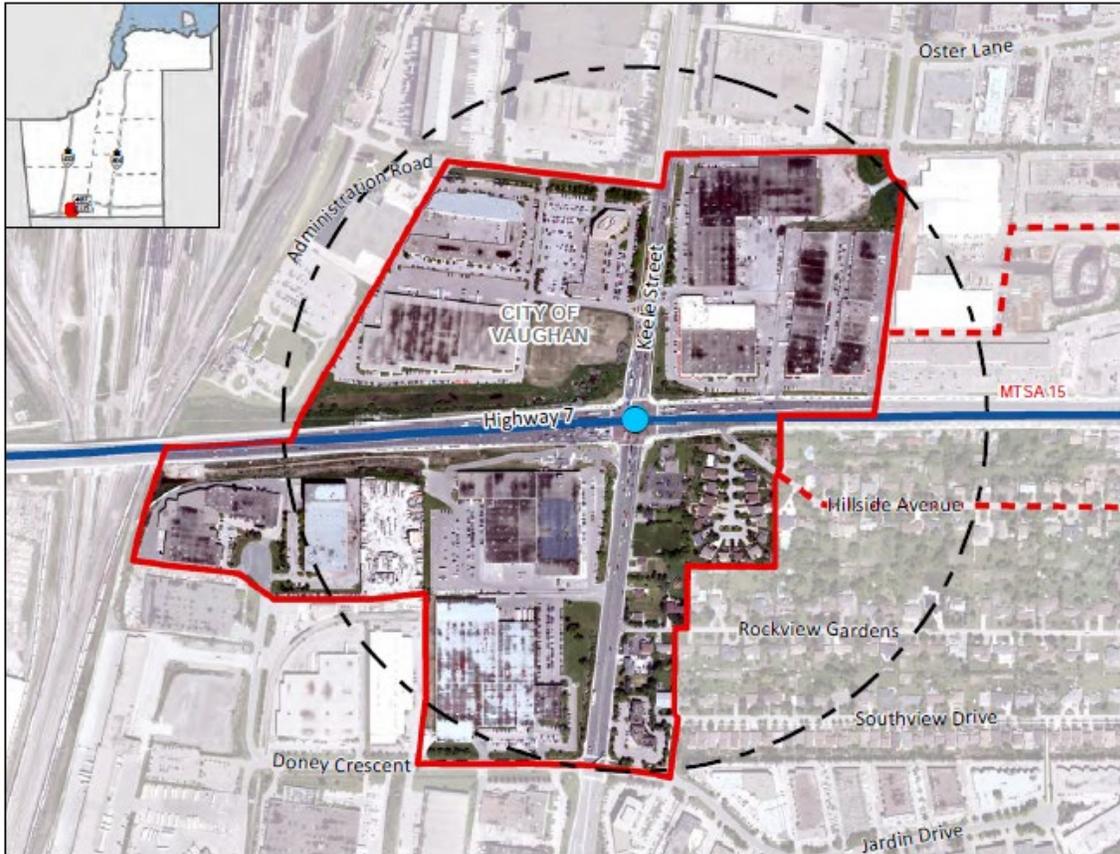
		retail permission on the property.				
V30	20 Roysun Road	Proposes intensification of the site with a broader range and mix of uses including office, commercial and residential uses.	0.8 ha			

## Appendix M - Draft Major Transit Station Areas 14 & 15

### Keele BRT Station

MTSA 14

On Highway 7 BRT Corridor  
 Along Highway 7 at Keele Street, Vaughan



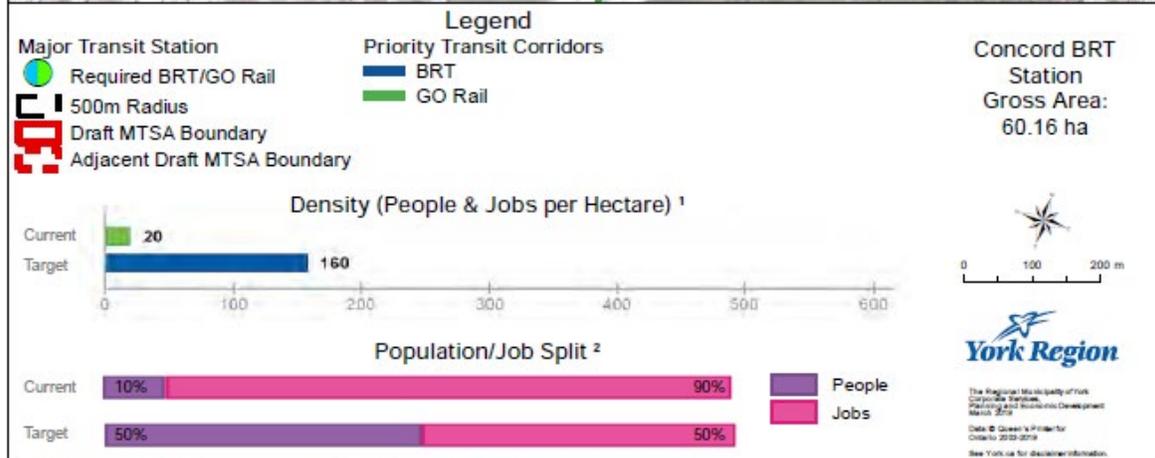
<sup>1</sup> Values are rounded to the nearest 5 People & Jobs per Hectare

<sup>2</sup> Values are rounded to the nearest 5%

# Concord BRT Station

MTSA 15

On Highway 7 BRT / Barrie GO Line Corridor  
 Along Highway 7 at Bowes Road/Baldwin Avenue, Vaughan



<sup>1</sup> Values are rounded to the nearest 5 People & Jobs per Hectare  
<sup>2</sup> Values are rounded to the nearest 5%

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## Terms of Reference/Glossary

MCR - Municipal Comprehensive Review

ERO - Environmental Registry of Ontario

PSEZ - Provincially Significant Employment Zones

GGH - Greater Golden Horseshoe

PPS - Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

GP - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019

VMC - Vaughan Metropolitan Centre

MTSA - Major Transit Station Area

YROP - York Region Official Plan, 2010

VOP - Vaughan Official Plan, 2010

OP - Official Plan

GTA - Greater Toronto Area

OMB - Ontario Municipal Board

LPAT - Local Planning Appeals Tribunal

VEZ - Vaughan Enterprise Zone

OPA - Official Plan Amendment