

# HIGHWAY 400 NORTH: WORKING PAPER ON EMPLOYMENT LAND NEED

**DRAFT**  
Prepared for



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**HEMSON**  
Consulting Ltd.

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## I INTRODUCTION

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The City of Vaughan has proposed to expand its urban area north along Highway 400 in order to provide additional employment lands. Hemson Consulting Ltd. is part of a consulting team retained by the City to determine if the expansion is necessary and, if so, to provide the appropriate justification for the urban boundary expansion to meet Regional and Provincial policy requirements. Other members of the consulting team will prepare a secondary plan, zoning by-law and associated urban design guidelines for the Study Area.

This working paper addresses the need for the proposed urban boundary expansion under the criteria in the new *Provincial Policy Statement* and the conditions set out in the *Region of York Official Plan*. This working paper is expected to be revised and finalized at the conclusion of the Highway 400 North Study in the Spring of 2006. This process will allow for changes in response to the following:

- Public comments arising from the consulting process undertaken as part of the Study;
- Release of the Province's final *Places to Grow Plan*, which may vary from the policies in the currently proposed plan; and
- Detailed analyses of the Highway 400 North lands by other members of the consulting team as part of the preparation of the secondary plan which may

necessitate some refinements to the information in this working paper.

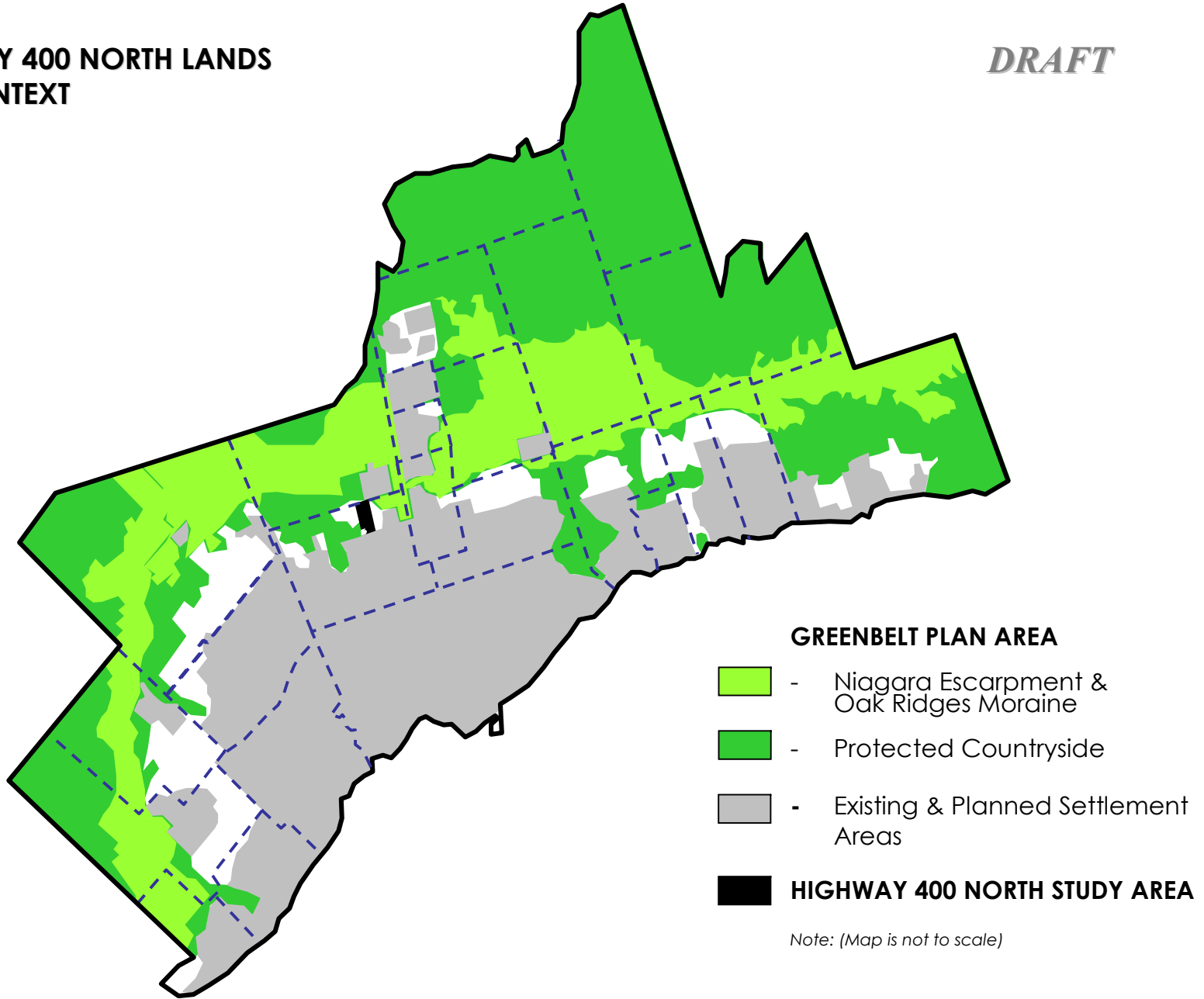
### A. HIGHWAY 400 NORTH LANDS CONSIST OF PROPERTIES BETWEEN TESTON ROAD AND THE KING-VAUGHAN BOUNDARY

The Highway 400 North Study Area comprises about 800 gross ha (2,000 acres) bounded by Teston Road and an existing estate residential subdivision to the south, the King-Vaughan municipal boundary to the north, Weston Road to the west and Jane Street to the east (see map on following page). Existing uses in the area include two highway service centres, scattered rural residential lots and existing rural industrial development on the King-Vaughan Road. The remainder of the Study Area is used mainly for agricultural uses.

The Study Area straddles Highway 400 and is immediately north of the existing urban area in the City of Vaughan. To the east and west are designated rural areas in Vaughan and to the north are largely rural lands in King Township. The Study Area is located south of the Oak Ridges Moraine but does contain designated Protected Countryside Greenbelt lands west of Highway 400, which consists of a tributary of the East Humber River referred to as Cold Creek along with associated wooded areas.

# HIGHWAY 400 NORTH LANDS GTA CONTEXT

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Source: Hemson Consulting Ltd. based upon Greenbelt Plan 2005, Ministry of Municipal Affairs

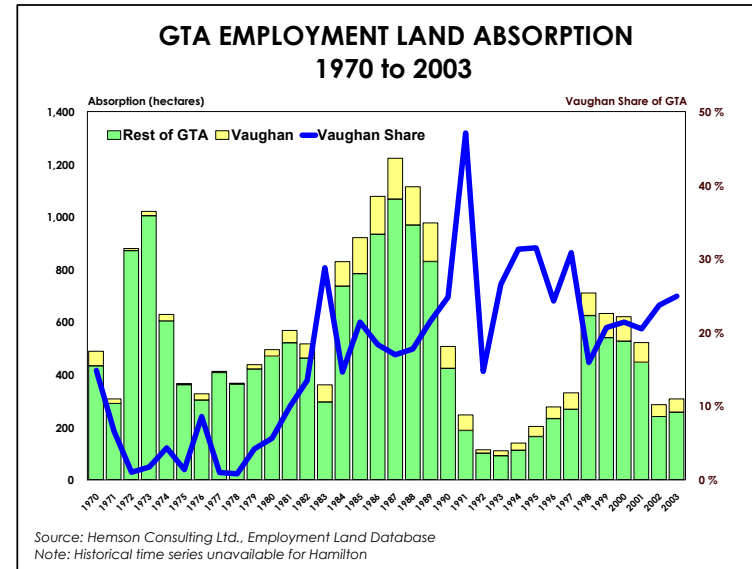
**B. HIGHWAY 400 NORTH LANDS ARE PROPOSED TO ADDRESS EMPLOYMENT LAND NEEDS IN VAUGHAN AND YORK REGION**

Vaughan has been one of the GTA’s preferred locations for employment land users over the last 25 years. The City’s employment land supply available for development, however, is becoming increasingly constrained while demand remains high. The Highway 400 North lands would help address short to medium term employment land needs for both the City and Region.

**1. Vaughan is A Major Player in the GTA Employment Land Market**

Since the early 1980s, in the GTA, Vaughan has been second only to Mississauga in employment land absorption and has maintained a 20 to 30 percent share of the total GTA market. Employment land values in Vaughan are among the highest in the GTA.

Within York Region, Vaughan is the dominant employment land supplier having accounted for over half of the total regional absorption in the most recent period from 2001 to 2004 and over three times the absorption of Markham, the next highest municipality in the Region.



York Region Employment Land Absorption 2001-2004	
Municipality	Absorption (net ha)
Vaughan	224.2
Markham	59.2
Richmond Hill	42.6
Newmarket	32.1
East Gwillimbury	27.4
Aurora	22.0
Rest of Region	10.2
<b>Total - York Region</b>	<b>417.6</b>

Source: York Region Planning and Development Services Department  
 Note: Employment land absorption is shown from mid 2001 to the end of 2004

Nearly 40% of Vaughan's employment base is in the manufacturing sector compared to only about 17% for the rest of York Region. Vaughan also has a large share of the Region's construction industry employment. Vaughan has a relatively lower share of its employment base than the rest of the Region in sectors that are typically accommodated in office buildings (Professional Scientific Services, Finance, Public Administration, Insurance and Real Estate and Management).

Employment Shares By Sector (%)		
Category	Vaughan	Rest of York Region
Agriculture, Mining, Utilities	0.1	0.4
Construction	14.1	4.5
Manufacturing	38.3	16.8
Trade	17.8	19.8
Transportation and Warehousing	4.9	2.5
FIRE, Info and Cultural industries	3.1	10.2
Prof. Scientific Services, Mgmt	9.4	18.8
Education	0.5	4.8
Health Care & Social Assistance	0.6	6.2
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	4.7	1.9
Accommodation and Food	3.2	6.4
Public Administration	0.2	3.5
Other	3.2	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: 2004 York Region Employment Survey

Employment land users are attracted to Vaughan because of the accessibility to 400 series highways, proximity to labour, markets and suppliers, availability of land in high quality business parks, proximity to other transportation facilities (including the Lester B. Pearson International Airport and intermodal facilities) and

the City's business-friendly municipal environment, among other factors.

## 2. High Demand for Employment Land in Vaughan is Expected to Continue

After recovering from the recession of the early to mid 1990s, employment in the GTA has grown at a rapid and steady rate. Much of this growth has been driven by increases in manufacturing employment. Over the longer term, the outlook remains positive for both the GTA and Ontario economies. Manufacturing, warehouse, distribution and office activities occupying industrial-type space on employment lands form a key part of the economy and are expected to continue to play an important role in the future.

Within the GTA, the western municipalities have been the preferred location for employment land uses because of their accessibility to major US trade routes and availability of well-located employment lands among other market factors. It is anticipated that this area will continue to hold a competitive advantage in the GTA.

Historically, Mississauga has been the major employment land provider in the GTA. As Mississauga's supply nears full build-out in the next five to ten years, pressures will build on other nearby markets. While Brampton will likely gain the greatest increase in market share, there will also be increasing development pressures in Vaughan and other municipalities in the west GTA that are brining new employment land areas to market including Oakville and Milton.

### 3. Highway 400 North Lands Identified by City For Addressing Future Employment Land Needs

The City and the Region previously designated extensive new employment land areas in the western part of Vaughan, near the future Highway 427 extension. However, a large portion of these lands are effectively frozen from development until the alignment of the highway extension is finalized. As a result, the employment land supply in Vaughan and the Region is becoming increasingly constrained.

The City of Vaughan recently identified the Highway 400 North lands as a potential future employment land area to address land needs at both the City and Regional level. It has been proposed that this area could potentially accommodate a new prestige employment area for the City and Region. This area is currently outside the designated Urban Area in the *Region of York Official Plan*.

### C. LAND NEEDS ANALYSIS MUST BE BASED ON REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Both the Province and the Region of York have specific criteria to be met for urban boundary expansions. The new *Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS) outlines requirements to be met for considering expansion of settlement areas. In addition, the Province has recently undertaken a number of growth management initiatives including the *Greenbelt Plan* and the Draft *Places to Grow Plan*. The assessment of the Vaughan 400

North boundary expansion needs to be undertaken in the context of these new initiatives.

#### 1. New PPS Sets Out Provincial Requirements

The new *Provincial Policy Statement*, adopted earlier this year by the Province, outlines specific criteria for expansion of urban boundaries to which the Highway 400 North area would be subject. Section 1.1.3.9 states that settlement area expansions must be part of a “comprehensive review”. The term comprehensive review is defined specifically in the definitions section of the PPS and includes consideration of regional population and growth projections, alternative directions for growth and protection of Provincial interests among other issues.

#### 2. Vaughan Highway 400 North Study Area Contains Greenbelt Lands

The recently adopted *Greenbelt Plan* designates areas protected from development in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and includes the Oak Ridges Moraine, Niagara Escarpment and an additional one million acres of “protected countryside” lands. The *Greenbelt Plan* directly affects growth management in the GGH by protecting identified areas from development. Areas not designated for protection under the *Greenbelt Plan* that are currently outside of an urban area can be considered for potential future urban expansion in the context of regional and local planning policies.

The Study Area contains Protected Countryside Greenbelt lands west of Highway 400. These lands contain a small branch of the East Humber River. This fact will need to be taken account of when estimating the developable lands for the Highway 400

North area and in the land use planning for the areas adjacent to the Greenbelt.

### 3. Places to Grow Supports PPS Growth Management Policies

*Places to Grow* is the Province's proposed growth management plan. The Plan provides policies on a range of issues including economic development, land use planning, environmental and natural resource area protection, infrastructure planning and servicing strategies. It outlines the Province's policies on the desired amount, type, form and location for future residential and employment growth in the Province.

The *Places to Grow Plan* currently does not have any legal status as it is still a draft plan. In its draft form, the Plan's policies regarding urban boundary expansions are similar to the policies contained in the new PPS. At such time as the *Places to Grow plan* is finalized, the Vaughan Highway 400 North urban expansion proposal will be re-assessed in the context of any revisions to the current proposed policies.

### 4. York Region Has Criteria For Urban Boundary Expansions

The Region's official plan contains conditions for considering the expansion of the urban area. The criteria address the following issues:

- Consistency with Regional population and employment forecasts;
- Need in relation to other lands available for development;
- Role in growth management strategies;
- Capability to provide for growth within the urban area;
- Impacts on the environment, agriculture, servicing;

- Protection and integration with the Regional Greenlands System;
- Amendment area is sufficiently large;
- Level of support for an urban structure of centres and corridors; and
- Other relevant policies in the Region's official plan.

## D. REPORT PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

This report is a working paper on the assessment of expanding the Urban Area of the Region of York to include the Vaughan Highway 400 North lands. The report will be finalized once the findings of the other disciplines in the Study are completed which will address the natural environment, transportation and servicing issues. The final version of this report will also take account of relevant policies in the final *Places to Grow Plan*.

There are three main issues that need to be addressed in examining the need for the urban boundary expansion:

1. Is an expansion of the Region's Urban Area for employment lands needed during the planning period to 2031?
2. Is the Highway 400 North Study Area an appropriate location for this expansion?
3. Why do these lands need to be designated for urban uses now?

The next chapter of the report discusses the current employment land supply and demand situation in York Region and assesses whether an expansion of the urban area is required. This is followed in Chapter 3 by a discussion of whether the Highway 400 North area is an appropriate location for new employment lands and the timing requirement for these lands. Chapter 4 evaluates the proposed urban expansion against the Provincial and Regional criteria. The final chapter provides a summary of our conclusions.

## II YORK REGION REQUIRES ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT LANDS

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The case for expanding the urban boundary is initially established through an employment land needs analysis. Consistent with the criteria of the PPS which requires a regional perspective, the supply and demand analysis is undertaken for York Region.

### A. YORK REGION HAS A LIMITED SUPPLY OF AVAILABLE EMPLOYMENT LANDS

A well-located and sufficient supply of employment lands are needed in order to ensure the continued economic health of York Region and the City of Vaughan. The timing of a large share of the Region's vacant long term supply is uncertain and is awaiting future transportation and servicing infrastructure decisions.

#### 1. GTA Remains an Industrial-Based Economy

While there have been changes in the nature of work resulting from advances in technology and productivity, there is no indication that the basic structure of the economy has changed. The GTA remains an industrial-based economy with a focus on manufacturing and distribution. By their nature, these activities demand significant amounts of land and are normally accommodated in single-storey buildings with sufficient areas for parking and movement of goods.

#### 2. Employment Land Areas Have Specific Land and Locational Requirements

Industrial-type uses including manufacturing, warehousing and distribution are accommodated on employment lands along with a range of other related uses including office and ancillary business service, retail and personal service uses. Sufficient amounts of well-located employment lands need to be provided to ensure continued economic competitiveness. Growth in employment land development is dependent upon the supply of significant amounts of land to accommodate new development. Much of that land will continue to be in greenfield locations.

Accessibility to markets, suppliers and labour are the key locational factors for most employment land uses. In the GTA, this is measured by accessibility to 400 series highways which provide access to major trade routes to the rest of Ontario, Canada and the US.

#### 3. Vaughan is the Major Employment Land Supplier in York Region

York Region's first employment land areas were developed around the CN rail yard in Vaughan and in other areas with rail access in Richmond Hill, Aurora and Newmarket. Employment land areas also developed as northern extensions of existing industrial areas in the City of Toronto, in Markham and Vaughan. Over the last 25 years, highway access has been the key locational factor with most new employment land

development concentrated along the Region's 400 series highways.

The main prestige employment land areas in the Region are located in the Highway 404 and Highway 7 area in Richmond Hill and Markham and in Vaughan in the employment areas along Highway 400 and the Pine Valley Business Park near Highway 407. The Highway 404 and Highway 7 area also contains the majority of the Region's major office buildings

Vaughan accommodates about half of the Region's total occupied employment lands with Markham accounting for about another 25 percent There are also smaller, more rural-type employment land areas in scattered locations across the Region.

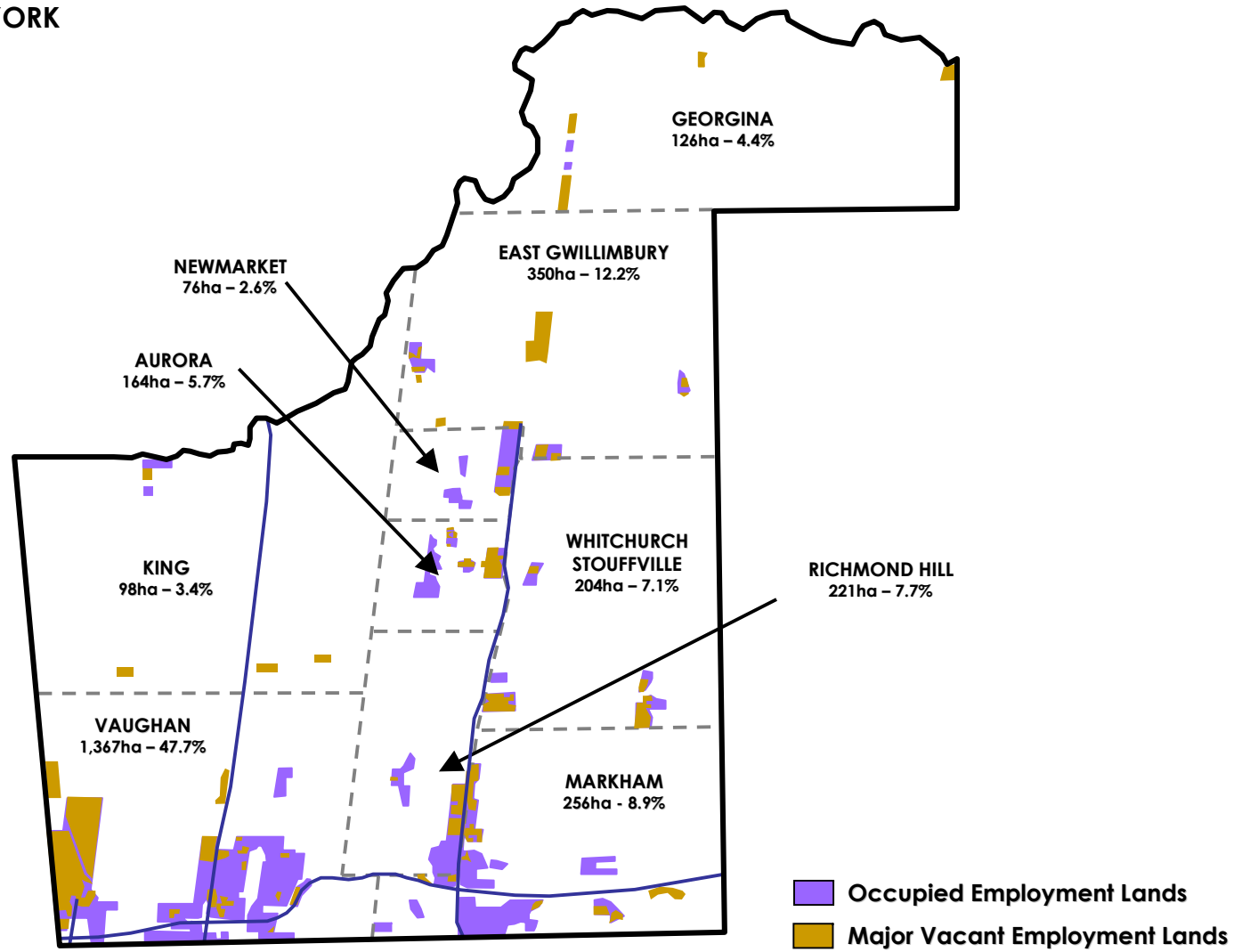
The maps on the following pages show the developed and vacant employment land supply in the Region and a similar, more detailed map for Vaughan.

<b>Estimate of Occupied Employment Lands in York Region As of January 2005</b>		
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Net Ha</b>	<b>Share</b>
Vaughan	2,190	50.2%
Markham	1,020	23.4%
Richmond Hill	330	7.6%
Newmarket	270	6.2%
Aurora	170	3.9%
East Gwillimbury	150	3.4%
Whitchurch-Stouffville	160	3.7%
King	40	0.9%
Georgina	30	0.7%
<b>Total - York Region</b>	<b>4,360</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Hemson estimate based on information provided by York Region Planning (estimates shown are rounded)

# VACANT EMPLOYMENT LAND INVENTORY REGION OF YORK

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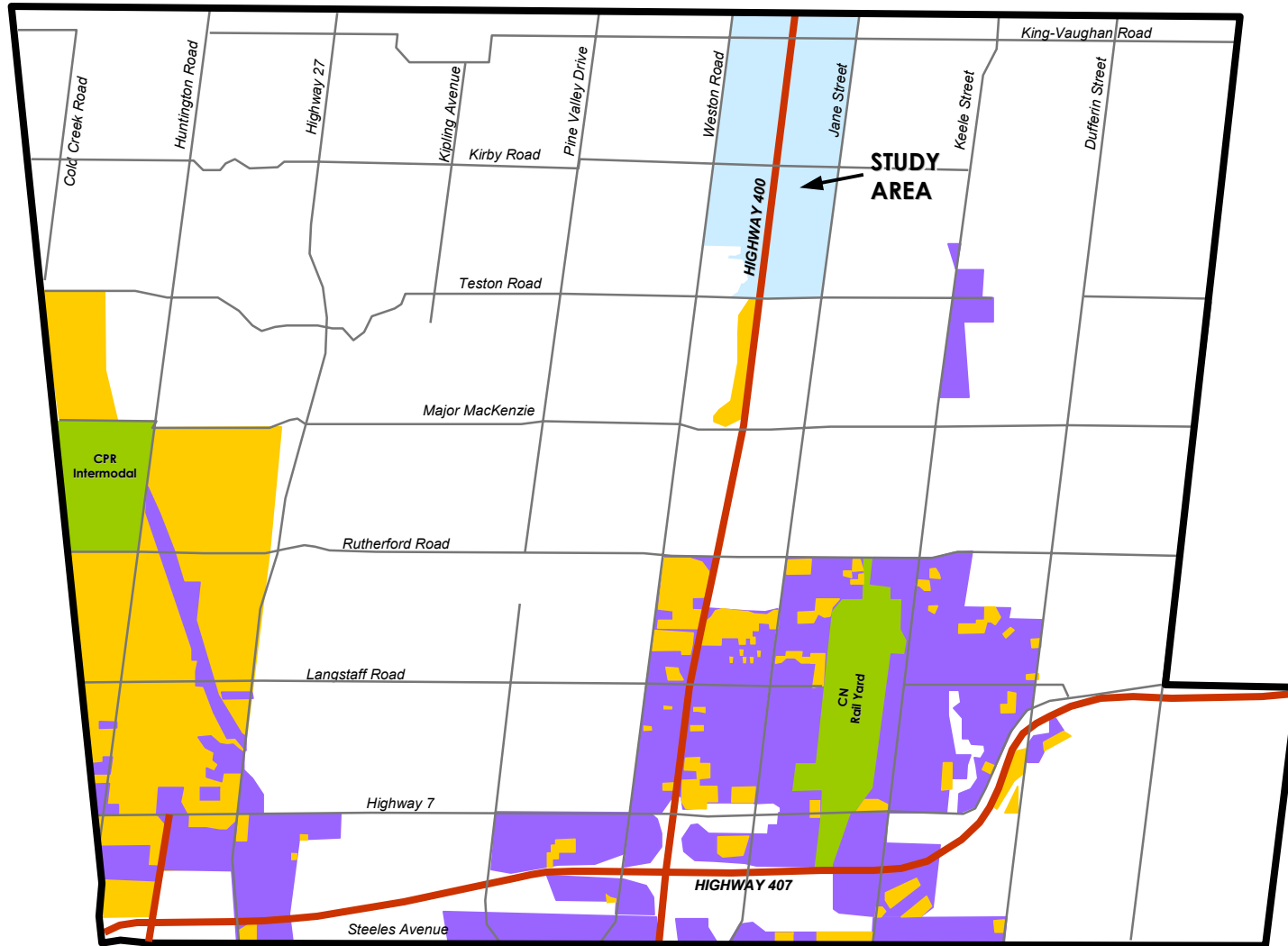


Source: Hemson Consulting Ltd. Based upon York Region Vacant Employment Land Inventory, 2005

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# OCCUPIED AND VACANT EMPLOYMENT LAND CITY OF VAUGHAN

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**Occupied Employment Lands**    **Major Vacant Employment Lands**    **Rail Facility**

Source: Hemson Consulting Ltd. Based upon York Region Vacant Employment Land Inventory, 2005

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#### **4. Pattern of Vacant Employment Land Supply in the Region is a Function of Past Land Use Planning Decisions and Environmental Constraints**

A large share of the vacant employment land supply in York Region is concentrated in Vaughan, mainly in the Highway 427 extension area. The remaining vacant supply is located mainly along Highway 404 and in the Queensville area. This situation has arisen due to the following key factors:

- Previous land use planning decisions which designated alternative potential employment areas along 400 series highways in the Region for residential uses and other non-employment land uses;
- The opportunity to develop new employment lands along the future Highway 427 extension;
- The general western bias favouring employment land development in the western GTA due to proximity to major trade corridors and markets;
- Vaughan's well-established position in the GTA employment land market; and
- Environmental constraints, especially those recently identified through the *Greenbelt Plan* which limits the potential for additional well-located future employment land areas.

There are limited opportunities for the designation of additional employment lands in the Region, especially for well-located employment lands with good access to a 400 series highway.

#### **5. York Region Has About 2,860 Net Ha Supply of Vacant Employment Lands**

York Region's employment land supply consists of a range of different types of parcels available for development in the short, medium or long term. Included in the supply are:

- Vacant parcels in established and developing business parks that can be developed in the short term;
- Rural employment areas on private and/or dry services;
- Unsubdivided and unserviced designated greenfield areas that are anticipated to be available for development in the medium to long term, adjusted to net supply in the analysis.

The following table summarizes the vacant supply in the Region as of the beginning of 2005 by municipality and provides comments on the market characteristics of the employment lands in each area.

YORK REGION EMPLOYMENT LAND SUPPLY (as of January 1, 2005)			
Municipality	Net Vacant Ha	Nature of Existing Supply	Identified and Potential Future Employment Areas
Aurora	164	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of vacant supply in new employment land area at Highway 404 and Wellington.</li> <li>Older employment land areas in central part of Aurora do not have good access to Highway 404.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"2C" lands in northeast part of Aurora along Highway 404 could potentially add another 80 net ha of employment land. The timing for development of these lands is uncertain.</li> </ul>
East Gwillimbury	350	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large share of vacant supply is in the planned future community of Queensville.</li> <li>Queensville requires extension of wastewater servicing and also extension of Highway 404 before employment land in the area can be marketable.</li> <li>Other vacant parcels are in more remote, more rural-type employment areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None beyond Queensville at this time, the <i>Greenbelt Plan</i> designates most of municipality as Protected Countryside.</li> </ul>
Georgina	126	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely rural type employment areas (Sutton, Keswick and Pfefferlaw) without good access to a 400 series highway.</li> <li>Demand for employment lands expected to increase with planned access improvements (extension of Highway 404 and construction of the Bradford By-Pass to Highway 400).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None currently identified, <i>Greenbelt Plan</i> designated most of municipality as Protected Countryside.</li> </ul>
King	98	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mainly rural-type employment land areas; most of the vacant supply is not close to a 400 series highway.</li> <li>Large share of current supply is unserviced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited future opportunities for additional employment lands, constrained by Greenbelt Plan areas.</li> </ul>

Markham	256	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of vacant supply is well-located along Highways 404 and 407; will require extension of water and wastewater servicing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential Highway 404 North Area and Buttonville Airport are approved for industrial uses and could provide an additional 174 net ha of employment land.</li> </ul>
Newmarket	76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited vacant supply in business parks along Highway 404.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No potential for additional employment lands, approaching build-out to municipal boundary.</li> </ul>
Richmond Hill	221	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited vacant supply available in Beaver Creek Business Park along Highway 404</li> <li>• Headford and Headford North provide greenfield employment land opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Leslie lands could potentially add another 115 net ha of employment land, could also potentially consider lands west of Leslie Street.</li> </ul>
Vaughan	1,367	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of vacant supply is in the area of the future Highway 427 extension.</li> <li>• Relatively small amount of additional vacant lands along Highway 400, just south of Rutherford Road.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highway 400 North Study Area lands could provide additional employment lands.</li> <li>• Some potential for additional lands, mainly to the east of the Study Area.</li> </ul>
Whitchurch-Stouffville	204	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the vacant supply is located in Gormley and along Highway 48 in Stouffville.</li> <li>• Only about 40% of inventory is serviced.</li> <li>• Private services approved for employment lands near Highway 404</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated <i>Greenbelt Plan</i> areas limit potential for additional employment land areas</li> </ul>
<b>Total - York Region</b>	<b>2,863</b>		

Source: Region of York Planning and Development Services Department and Hemson Consulting

## 6. Region's Available Short Term Supply is Very Limited

The previous table shows the total potential supply of vacant employment lands in York Region. A large portion of this supply, however, is encumbered in the short to medium term.

- The Highway 427 lands comprise over 25% of the Region's vacant supply. The bulk of these lands cannot be developed for employment uses until the alignment for the Highway 427 extension is finalized. To date, the process to determine an alignment has been relatively slow. The EA process is scheduled to start in the coming months and is expected to require at least three years for completion. The extension of servicing would require additional time before development could commence in some parts of the area. Although parts of the employment area will be able to be developed before the actual construction of the highway, completion of the extension, which is also likely to require additional time, would greatly enhance the marketability of the employment lands.
- Most of the vacant supply in East Gwillimbury is part of the planned community of Queensville which is anticipated to accommodate both residential and employment uses. Employment lands are planned for the areas along the future Highway 404 extension. The area requires extension of wastewater servicing from the south before development can commence. The extension of Highway 404 will also be a key requirement for the marketability of the employment lands.
- There are also employment land areas in the Region that are only approved for private servicing. The market for

employment uses for these types of areas is much more limited than for a serviced business park with good highway access.

Removing the "encumbered lands" and lands approved for private servicing reduces the regional employment land supply by over 1,100 ha, which is equivalent to nearly 40% of the total supply.

In actuality, the parcels of employment land currently available for sale are even more limited. In Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Markham, most landowners are only willing to enter into lease or design-build arrangements. In addition, lands in Vaughan and in other parts of the Region are under pressure for redesignation to residential and retail uses. Examples in Vaughan are the employment land areas near the Vaughan Mills Mall and the planned mixed-use area along Steeles Avenue between Keele and Jane.

## 7. Other Potential Future Employment Areas in the Region Could Add Another 370 Net Ha of Supply

Outside of the Study Area, a number of other, smaller areas have been identified as potential future employment land areas. They consist of:

- North Leslie lands in Richmond Hill
- North Markham and Buttonville Airport Employment Lands
- Aurora 2C lands

Together, these areas could potentially provide about another 370 net ha of employment lands. However, these areas are currently at different stages in the planning process and it is not

certain when or if all or some of these lands will come onto the market as employment lands.

#### **8. Intensification On Employment Lands is a Long Term Proposition**

The new PPS and the Draft *Places to Grow Plan* contain a number of policies requiring municipalities to maximize opportunities for intensification of all types of land uses. However, most of the focus is on the intensification of residential uses. For example, the Draft *Places to Grow Plan* has a 40% target for residential uses but no specific target for employment uses.

In employment land areas, there are very few practical opportunities to intensify. For example, for new development, there are some opportunities to intensify use but the ability to do so is limited by a number of factors related to the operational needs of industrial facilities. A single storey building form is required for most employment land activities with the exception of office uses. Outside of the area occupied by the building, land is needed for parking, loading and truck manoeuvring.

Intensification of existing developed areas is even more difficult to achieve due to physical constraints, development economics and land occupancy requirements of the majority of uses locating on employment lands. There are few effective economic incentives to undertake intensification projects on employment lands and the returns usually do not justify the costs and associated risks. Over time, some sites in business parks will intensify with complementary uses, especially in those areas fronting onto major arterials.

In general, the intensification process on employment lands is slow and will accommodate only a very small portion of the total market demand for employment lands. This is demonstrated in the City's Jane / Highway 7 employment area where a recent study<sup>1</sup> prepared for the City identified "a lack of financial feasibility and weak market support" as the reasons for a lack of any significant change.

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York Region has about 2,860 net ha of vacant employment land. However, about 40% of this supply is tied up in areas encumbered by transportation infrastructure and servicing constraints. Other potential employment land areas in the Region could provide about 370 net ha of supply. Intensification can only accommodate a very limited portion of the total demand for employment lands.

#### **B. VAUGHAN AND YORK REGION WILL CONTINUE TO ATTRACT HIGH LEVEL OF DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT LANDS**

Vaughan and York Region have experienced relatively high levels of employment growth in recent years with a large share of this growth occurring on employment lands. Over the next 25 years, York Region is forecast to continue to experience healthy

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<sup>1</sup> *The Planning Partnership et al., The Jane / 7 Employment Area Redevelopment Study, September 2004 prepared for the City of Vaughan.*

levels of employment growth with about half of this growth being accommodated on employment lands.

### **1. Large Share of Employment Growth Will Continue to Be Focussed on Employment Lands**

Employment land areas currently account for about 40 percent of total employment in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton (GTAH). Given the structure of the GTAH economy, it is anticipated that this trend of employment lands accommodating about 40 percent of employment growth will continue over the next 25 years.

### **2. Employment Method is Most Appropriate For Projecting Land Need**

Employment land need is commonly projected by two methods: the absorption method and the employment forecast approach. In the first method, land needs are forecast based on average historic employment land absorption over a specified period which is then projected over the forecast period. In the second approach, an employment forecast by type combined with employment density assumptions are used to project land needs.

Employment land absorption, while useful in examining historic trends and market tendencies, does not provide a good indicator of future employment land development. For example, if the employment land market has been supply constrained over an extended period, then using historic absorption may underestimate future demand and associated land needs.

The employment forecast method relies on a sound employment forecast by type and reasonable employment density assumptions.

It is the preferred method for forecasting employment land need since it is based on a projection of economic performance which is also tied to the population forecast.

### **3. Employment Land Employment in York Region to Grow By Over 160,000 From 2005 to 2031**

The land need forecast used in this report is based on the employment projection contained in the report recently prepared by Hemson Consulting Ltd. for the Province and the Regions of the GTAH including the Cities of Toronto and Hamilton, *The Growth Outlook For the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (hereafter referred to as the GGH forecast).

The GGH forecast is the basis upon which the Province is developing growth management policies and targets for the *Places to Grow* Plan. The following is a brief summary of the main assumptions of the GGH forecast:

- The base assumption of the forecast is that there will be sufficient economic activity to maintain relatively constant levels of labour force participation.
- Employment growth in the GTAH is based on age-specific participation rates adjusted for unemployment and net in-commuting.
- The employment forecast is then distributed by type to the three major types of employment: population-related, major office and employment land employment.
  - Major office employment is employment occurring in freestanding office buildings of 20,000 sq.ft. or more.

- Population-related employment is employment growth which occurs in response to population growth. It primarily services a resident population and consists of retail, education, health care and municipal government, but also includes home-based employment.
- Employment land employment is the employment which occurs in land extensive employment areas and business parks, mostly in industrial-type buildings.
- Allocation of the GTAH employment forecast to the Regions and the Cities of Toronto and Hamilton is based on historic patterns and future market potential.

As York Region matures, the share of total employment on employment lands is anticipated to decline very slightly with corresponding rises in major office and population-related employment. York Region is forecast to maintain a steady share of about 35 percent of the GTAH employment land market

The following table summarizes the employment forecast for York Region as contained in the GGH Growth Outlook Report.

Forecast Employment in York Region (000s)				
	Employment Land Employment	Major Office	Population-Related	Total
2001	224	48	113	385
2011	341	85	163	590
2021	393	109	199	701
2031	429	126	224	779

Source: The Growth Outlook For the Greater Golden Horseshoe  
 Note: Compact Scenario Forecast is used; which is the same scenario used in the Draft *Places to Grow Plan*

The GGH employment land employment forecast for York Region is slightly higher than the Region’s current 2026 forecast. The Region is currently reviewing its own forecasts in light of the new Provincial forecasts.

At the beginning of 2005, it is estimated that York Region’s total employment land employment was approximately 267,000. Therefore, from 2005 to 2031, employment land employment (ELE) is forecast to grow by about 160,000.

**C. CURRENT SUPPLY IS INSUFFICIENT TO ACCOMMODATE FORECAST DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT LAND**

The PPS states that sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate projected land needs for a time horizon of up to 20 years. The Draft *Places to Grow Plan* is based on a 2031 planning horizon. The City of Vaughan and the Region of York, along with many other Ontario municipalities, are moving towards a

2031 planning horizon. A 25-year planning period is needed in order to make informed decisions about infrastructure investment and phasing and other growth management-related issues. Accordingly, a 25-year planning time frame is used in the land need analysis in this Study (to 2031).

To determine employment land needs to 2031, an analysis of current employment land densities in York Region was undertaken. The approximate weighted average density is about 50 employees per net ha. This density is held constant throughout the forecast period. Any increases in employment density over the forecast period are assumed to be offset by declines in employment densities in older employment land areas, a phenomena common to most older employment areas.

In assessing employment land needs, an adjustment for long-term vacancy and under-utilization is also required. In most employment land areas, there will always be parcels that remain undeveloped over an extended period for a variety of reasons including site and physical constraints, lack of landowner financial ability or interest and others. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that five percent of the Region's employment lands remain in long term vacancy and another five percent are under-utilized. The following table estimates the employment land capacity of York Region at full development of currently designated employment lands.

<b>York Region Employment Land Capacity</b>	
<b>Employment Land Employment (ELE) Forecast</b>	
2031 ELE Forecast	429,000
Estimated ELE as of January 2005	266,700
Net New Growth 2005-2031	162,300
<b>Land Requirement</b>	
Density of Occupied Lands	50 empl per net ha
Net New Occupied Land	3,250 net ha
Estimate of Current Occupied Lands	4,340 net ha
Occupied Land Requirement	7,590 net ha
<b>Adjustment For Vacancy/ Under-utilization</b>	
Adjustment (10%)	840 net ha
<b>Land Need</b>	
Total Land Need	8,430 net ha
Less Currently Occupied	(4,340 net ha)
Less Currently Vacant	(2,860 net ha)
Net New Land Need	1,230 net ha

Source: Hemson Consulting estimates using Region of York employment land supply data

The above analysis indicates that the Region has an insufficient employment land supply to meet forecast growth. Another 1,200 net ha above and beyond the current designated supply is required to accommodate new development to 2031.

Potential new employment land areas outside of the Study Area could provide about an additional 370 net ha leaving a deficit of over 800 net ha.

York Region has also recently undertaken an assessment of the capacity of their current employment land supply. Using a different method to estimate long term vacancy and the Region's slightly lower employment land employment forecast, the results of its analysis indicate that there is about an 18 year supply of employment lands under the current designations. This estimate incorporates the employment land supply referred to earlier, some of which has uncertain timing.

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The Region of York has an insufficient supply of employment lands to meet anticipated long-term needs. From a land need perspective, expansion of the regional urban boundary is justified for the inclusion of additional employment lands. The following chapter examines the issue of the appropriateness of the Highway 400 North lands as the preferred location for this urban expansion and why these lands are needed now.

### **III HIGHWAY 400 NORTH LANDS PROVIDE BEST PROSPECT FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT LANDS IN THE REGION**

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Chapter 2 established the need for the designation of additional employment lands in York Region based on an analysis of existing and potential future supply and forecast demand for employment lands. This chapter addresses the following two key issues: first of all, why are the Highway 400 North lands the most appropriate location for additional employment lands and secondly, why these lands are needed as soon as possible?

#### **A. HIGHWAY 400 NORTH LANDS CAN HELP ADDRESS EMPLOYMENT LAND NEEDS**

The Highway 400 North Lands are located immediately north of the existing urban area in Vaughan on both sides of Highway 400 in the area bounded by Teston Road and the north boundary of an existing estate residential area to the south, the municipal boundary with King Township to the north, Weston Road to the west and Jane Street to the east.

Major existing uses include two Highway 400 service centres, scattered rural residential lots, and existing industrial uses with outdoor storage for vehicles and equipment located in the northeast quadrant of the King-Vaughan Road and Highway 400. The Trans-Canada Pipeline traverses the Study Area from east to west, south of Kirby Road.

As indicated earlier in this report, within the Study Area the lands west of Highway 400 contain Greenbelt lands which would be excluded from potential development. There are also additional environmental features east and west of Highway 400 as identified in the City's Official Plan, however, they do not appear to be significant constraints to development. The majority of the Study Area is characterized by flat to gently rolling terrain used mainly for agricultural purposes. Detailed work on the environmental constraints in the area is currently being undertaken by Dougan & Associates as part of this study process.

The following is an initial estimate of the developable area within the Highway 400 North Study Area. This estimate will be refined during the course of the study as the results of work by other disciplines on the study team become available.

<b>Preliminary Estimate of Developable Lands In Vaughan Highway 400 North Study Area</b>	
<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Total Gross Land Area	805
Environmental Areas	
Greenbelt	176
Other Environmental Features	<u>5</u>
Subtotal	181
Existing Uses	
Service Centres and Rest Area	32
Industrial Uses	14
Trans-Canada Pipeline	4
Residential lots (1 acre or less)	<u>2</u>
Subtotal	52
Transportation Infrastructure	
Highway Interchanges (Teston Rd. only)	0.2
Gross Developable Area (Note 1)	572

Source: Macaulay Shiomi Howson Ltd.

Note: Adjusted for overlaps

In total, about 570 gross ha or 460 net ha of land are potentially available for development. This estimate is based on the highway service centres remaining in their current configuration and the construction of one additional highway interchange at Teston Road. Additional interchanges will reduce the amount of developable land.

The Study Area could therefore accommodate nearly 40 percent of the total additional employment land needed in the Region to 2031 (40 percent of the need for 1,200 ha).

These lands are the only lands outside the existing urban boundary in Vaughan which front on and have the potential for interchanges with an existing 400 series highway. The lands east and west of the Study Area are similar in nature although there are significant portions of the lands to the west in the *Greenbelt Plan*.

An employment land designation for the Study Area would not preclude either future residential or employment land uses on non-greenbelt lands east or west of the Study Area. However, such a determination would be premature at this time.

## **B. HIGHWAY 400 NORTH LANDS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD UPON EXISTING PRESTIGE DEVELOPMENT IN CITY AND REGION**

The Vaughan Highway 400 North lands provide one of the last opportunities in the Region to develop new employment lands along a 400 series highway and also to provide a new prestige business park in the City and Region.

### **1. Prestige Employment Land Development is Defined By Building and Site Design Rather Than Use**

Many municipalities aspire to attract what is commonly referred to as “prestige development” to their employment land areas. Prestige development is most often viewed in terms of certain

types of activities including high-tech and research and development businesses.

In reality, a prestige business park is characterized by facilities with a high level of investment and building maintenance along with high quality site design and landscaping. Prestige buildings can contain relatively standard industrial functions such as light manufacturing, warehousing and administrative offices. Prestige industrial buildings tend to have a higher office component than average. Whereas a typical industrial building might have 10% office, a prestige facility would tend to consist of about 20 to 30% as office space.

## **2. Many of Vaughan's Existing Employment Land Areas Contain Prestige Industrial Development**

Vaughan's employment land areas initially developed around the CN rail yard and along Highway 7 in the Concord area and consisted of businesses in the manufacturing, warehousing, transportation and construction industries. Today, within the manufacturing sector in the City as a whole, there are major concentrations in the plastics, auto parts, fabricated metal, furniture, and food and beverage industries.

While Vaughan's older employment land districts such as the Jane and Highway 7 area maintain a more general industrial appearance and image, the City's newer business parks are accommodating facilities developed at a higher design standard. Pine Valley Business Park and the employment land areas on either side of Highway 400 are prestige business parks containing some of the most valuable employment land in the GTA. There are also employment land areas further east that also have seen recent development of prestige employment land facilities.

While the existing Highway 400 corridor contains numerous prestige industrial buildings, the entire corridor was not planned in a comprehensive manner. The Study Area presents the opportunity to create an improved environment along Highway 400 based on a comprehensive vision and urban design guidelines.

Employment land development near Highway 427 has tended to consist of larger, more general-type industrial uses. The CP Intermodal facility near Highway 50 and Rutherford Road has attracted a number of warehouse and distribution businesses. The Highway 427 and 7 area contains the large Royal Plastics manufacturing operations. However, very recent development on the north side of Highway 7 is tending to contain a higher office component. The photographs on the following page show examples of recent employment land development in Vaughan.

While Vaughan has been very successful in attracting industrial development over the past 25 years, it has not had the same level of success in the office sector. There is no recognizable concentration of office development in Vaughan; office buildings are in scattered locations throughout the City's employment areas.

The major office concentration in the Region is at Highways 404 and 7 in Markham and Richmond Hill. Employment land development in the Highway 404 corridor in general tends to have a relatively higher office component than the Highway 400 corridor. Vaughan is working towards creating a new urban focus, including major office uses, at the Vaughan Corporate Centre at Highways 400 and 7 as well as an office/business node at Highway 427 and 7. In addition, the Region is encouraging the development of high density employment uses, including office uses, along the Highway 7 and Yonge Street corridors.

# EMPLOYMENT LAND BUILDINGS – CITY OF VAUGHAN

*DRAFT DECEMBER 13, 2005*



**Medical Office Building**



**Office Building**



**New Mixed Office & Light Industrial**



**Industrial Multiple**



**Industrial Multiple**



**Freestanding Industrial**



**Distribution Centre**



**Freestanding Industrial**



**Freestanding Industrial**

### **3. Area Has Potential to Build Upon Existing Prestige Employment Land Development in Vaughan**

The subject lands would have good access and visibility to Highway 400 once the Teston Road interchange is constructed. Additional interchanges with Highway 400 would further enhance the area's market appeal. Types of development similar to those being developed in the Highway 400 corridor further south would likely be attracted to the Highway 400 North lands. Because of the subject lands strategic location, it could act as a gateway into Vaughan, providing the opportunity to encourage the use of a high design standard, especially along Highway 400 and the surrounding arterial roads. The area would also be an extension of the yet to be developed Weston Highlands Employment area to the south, on the west side of Highway 400, which is designated as a prestige employment land area.

The Highway 400 North lands could also potentially attract campus-style office and research facilities that would not locate in the Vaughan Corporate Centre because of their requirements for land extensive properties. The areas west of Highway 400 provide the opportunity to provide attractive campus-style sites that are integrated with the existing environmental features.

The future employment land areas in the vicinity of the Highway 427 extension will likely attract a somewhat different market segment than the Highway 400 corridor lands. This is especially true for the lands around the intermodal facility which will likely attract a greater share of warehouse and distribution type uses.

### **C. LIMITED ALTERNATIVES FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT LANDS IN THE REGION**

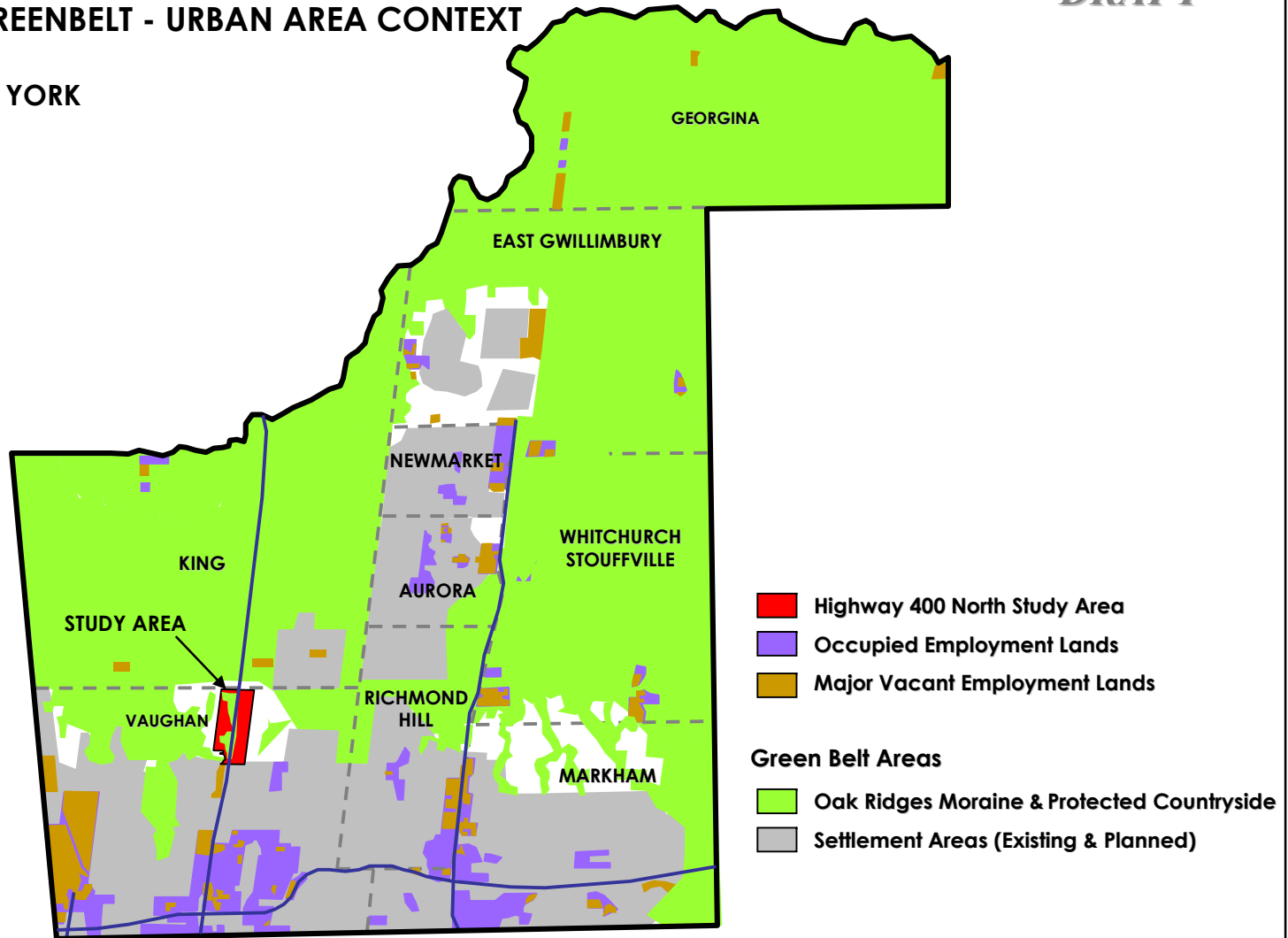
The designated Greenbelt lands and various land-use planning decisions throughout the Region have limited the potential opportunities for future employment lands with good access to a 400 series highway. The map on the following page shows the vacant employment land supply with the designated Greenbelt lands superimposed. The "white areas" between the existing urban areas and the Greenbelt are commonly interpreted as potential future urban areas. Outside of the Study Area, it is evident that there are very limited alternatives for well-located employment lands in the Region.

The remaining opportunities in other locations in the Region including the 2C lands in Aurora, the North Leslie lands in Richmond Hill and the North Markham lands, will potentially provide additional but relatively small amounts of new employment land supply along Highway 404 in relation to the long-term land needs of the Region. The Study Area lands in Vaughan provide the best opportunity to develop a large new employment land area with good 400 series highway access in a central location in the Region.

# EMPLOYMENT LAND INVENTORY WITHIN GREENBELT - URBAN AREA CONTEXT

*DRAFT*

REGION OF YORK



Source: Hemson Consulting Ltd. based upon York Region Vacant Employment Land Inventory, 2005, and Greenbelt Plan 2005, Ministry of Municipal Affairs

NTS

## **D. HIGHWAY 400 NORTH LANDS ARE NEEDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

To ensure the continued economic competitiveness of the City of Vaughan and York Region, a well-located and sufficient employment land supply is required to meet demands over the next 25 years.

### **1. Adequate Supply is Required To Maintain Economic Competitiveness**

The employment land market is cyclical; for a given planning period, there can be periods of very low and very high demand. It is important for both the City and the Region to have an available and well-located employment land supply at all times to meet the needs of the market and to be able to take advantage of upturns in the market.

Unlike the housing market whose per unit land needs are within a relatively narrow range, employment land users can demand a range of different site sizes from small parcels less than one ha to large 20 ha sites for major manufacturing operations. Therefore, a large vacant supply is needed at all times to be able to accommodate both small and large users.

As employment land areas in a municipality become fully developed, the number of choices available to prospective users becomes more constrained. Also, in many cases, the last parcels to be developed in a business park can remain vacant for extended periods of time for a variety of reasons related to potential site constraints, parcel configuration issues and other factors.

As a municipality's employment land supply approaches 75 to 80% developed, the range of available site sizes and types becomes restricted to the point where the municipality can no longer be a fully competitive supplier in the market.

### **2. Timing of Large Share of Existing Supply is Uncertain**

York Region's designated employment land supply as discussed in the previous chapter is about 2,860 net ha. In terms of land actually available for development in the short to medium term, the supply is much more limited.

- Although the EA process for the alignment of the Highway 427 extension is starting up again, there is no certainty as to when the employment lands in the area will come onto the market. The delay in the highway extension affects nearly 700 net ha of future vacant supply.
- The timing of the Queensville employment lands are even more uncertain and are dependent on the extension of Highway 404 and needed wastewater servicing. Just over 200 net ha of employment lands are designated in the Queensville community.
- Another 200 net ha of the Region's supply is on lands approved for private servicing located in East Gwillimbury, Georgina and King. While there will continue to be demand for the types of employment uses that locate on lands with private services, it is a relatively small share of the overall employment land market.
- Employment lands in Georgina primarily serve the rural employment land market and are relatively distant from the major markets in the southern part of York Region.

Currently, there are about 127 net ha of vacant employment land in Georgina.

- Taken together the above lands account for over 40% of the Region's designated vacant supply.

### 3. Supply Needs to Satisfy a Range of Investment Types

Employment land users develop new facilities in different ways. Some prefer to purchase their own parcel to develop a new facility while others enter into design-build and lease-back arrangements wherein a second party retains ownership of the land.

Currently, there are very limited choices for employment lands that are available for sale in York Region's major markets. In the Highway 404 corridor and in many parts of Vaughan, due to the current land ownership, most properties are only available for lease or as part of a design-build, lease-back arrangement. A larger employment land supply would likely provide additional choices for employment land users in terms of land ownership and leasing arrangements.

### 4. Shortage of Available Large Sites in the Region

There is currently a shortage of large vacant parcels in the Region with nearly half of the current supply being less than 1 hectare. The majority of available parcels in the Region's established business parks are relatively small.

Site Size Profile - York Region Vacant Employment Lands	
Size Category	Share of Supply
< 1 ha	45%
1 to 5 ha	36%
5 to 10 ha	10%
10 to 20 ha	6%
> 20 ha	4%

Source: York Region Planning and Development Services Department, January 2005

The Vaughan Highway 400 North Study Area could potentially provide a range of different parcel sizes and could accommodate large employment land users.

### 5. Supply is Needed Now to Address Demand in Next 10 Years

Over the next 25 years, about 60% of the employment on employment lands growth is forecast to occur in the first 10 year period, from 2006 to 2016. The rate of employment growth slows in the latter part of the planning period. This timing aspect of the demand for employment lands emphasizes the need to act now to designate additional employment land supply.

The Vaughan Highway 400 North lands provide an important opportunity for the City of Vaughan and the Region to designate a new employment land area that is strategically positioned in the Region. There is very limited potential for the designation of other employment lands in the Region with the same level of accessibility and locational attributes. The subject lands could potentially build upon Vaughan's existing prestige employment land development along Highway 400.

The timing of a large share of the Region's current medium to long-term supply is uncertain. If the City and Region decide to proceed with an urban designation for the Highway 400 North lands, it will likely take a number of years before new employment land development can commence. Should the Highway 427 lands continue to be delayed and other new supply areas remain unserved, York Region is at risk of not being able to provide an adequate supply of employment lands both in the medium and long term.

Decisions on the urban designation of the Highway 400 North lands need to be made now in order to ensure that the Region can continue to provide an adequate supply of competitive employment lands on an ongoing basis over the coming years.

## IV PROPOSED HIGHWAY 400 NORTH URBAN EXPANSION MEETS REQUIREMENTS OF PROVINCE AND REGION

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This chapter evaluates the proposed Highway 400 North urban expansion in the context of the Provincial Policy Statement and the Region's relevant official plan policies.

### A. VAUGHAN HIGHWAY 400 NORTH MEETS PPS REQUIREMENTS

The Provincial Policy Statement requires that any expansions of settlement areas meet the following "comprehensive review" criteria (Section 1.1.3.9). This section examines each part of this requirement in relation to the Vaughan Highway 400 North proposal.

#### 1. Based on a Review of Population and Growth Projections

The PPS requires the review to reflect projections and allocations by upper-tier municipalities and provincial plans. Currently, there is no approved provincial plan for Vaughan, York Region or the GTA. When finalized, the *Places to Grow Plan* will provide growth projections for the upper tier municipalities in the GTA.

The supply and demand analysis undertaken in Chapter 2 of this report reflects the growth outlook which will be used as input to the *Places to Grow Plan*. The Region of York is currently reviewing their forecasts in light of the latest forecast produced

for *Places to Grow*. The conclusion of this analysis was that the Region requires additional employment lands to meet medium to long term demands.

#### 2. Considers Alternative Directions For Growth While Protecting Provincial Interests

As discussed earlier in this report, because of the land use planning decisions made in other parts of the Region and the areas designated in the *Greenbelt Plan*, there are few alternative options for new employment lands in York Region and Vaughan, especially lands that would have good accessibility to a 400 series highway.

An urban expansion to include the Highway 400 North lands would result in a further concentration of the Region's employment land supply in Vaughan but there are few alternative choices in the Region.

The Highway 400 North urban expansion supports a number of Provincial interests as follows.

##### a. Supports Economic Development Policies

Section 1.3.1 of the PPS states that:

Planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness by:

- a) providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment to meet long-term needs;
- b) providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;
- c) planning for, protecting and preserving employment areas for current and future uses; and
- d) ensuring the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs.

Section 1.1.2 requires that sufficient land be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of employment opportunities ... to meet projected needs for a time horizon of up to 20 years.

In addition, Section 2.5 of the Draft *Places to Grow Plan* specifically recognizes the importance of employment areas to the regional economy and the locational requirements of employment lands.

We need to ensure that an adequate supply of land is available across the GGH to accommodate industrial uses in large areas separated from residential and other sensitive uses. These employment areas should be strategically located within urban areas near major transportation corridors or with good access to the U.S. border.

The Highway 400 North urban expansion supports economic growth in the City, Region and Province by providing needed new employment lands thereby supporting the long term economic competitiveness of the City and Region.

#### **b. Results in Efficient Development and Land Use Patterns**

The Highway 400 North lands are a contiguous extension of the existing urban area along Highway 400 allowing for the logical extension of infrastructure and services to the Study Area. Most of the lands within the subject area would be likely developed at a similar or potentially higher density compared to other prestige business parks in Vaughan and the Region. Development of the subject lands would also maximize the use of existing provincial infrastructure in the form of Highway 400.

These lands are the only lands outside of the existing urban boundary in Vaughan that have good accessibility to an existing 400 series highway. The lands east and west of the Study Area are similar in nature but lack the same level of accessibility to a 400 series highway. In addition, a significant portion of the lands to the west of the Study Area is in the Greenbelt.

An employment land designation for the Study Area would not preclude either future residential or employment land uses on the non-Greenbelt lands east or west of the Study Area.

#### **c. Preserves Greenbelt Areas**

As reported earlier, the Study Area contains Greenbelt lands which will be not be considered as developable lands. In addition, in developing the secondary plan designations and policies, special consideration will be given to those areas adjacent to the Greenbelt in terms of land uses, densities and setbacks and their impacts on the nearby environmental lands. The design of an appropriate interface with the Greenbelt areas would also be beneficial from an economic development perspective as sites could be provided that would be appealing to campus style business activities looking for an attractive business

park environment adjacent to natural features (such as woodlots).

**2. Utilizes Opportunities to Accommodate Growth Through Intensification and Redevelopment**

As discussed earlier in this report, intensification is a long term proposition for employment land areas. And even in the longer term, the practical opportunities for intensification on most employment land sites are very limited. Vaughan and York Region need to have an adequate supply of greenfield employment lands to accommodate projected demands; intensification will likely only provide a very small portion of the total demand.

**3. Does Not Comprise Specialty Crop Areas and There Are No Reasonable Alternatives on Lower Priority Agricultural Lands**

The Study Area does not contain any specialty crop areas. Similar to most other urban areas in the GTA, most of the Study Area consists of Class I agricultural land. Development of the Highway 400 North lands as a business park would result in the loss of agricultural lands, however, impacts on remaining surrounding agricultural activities can be mitigated. There are no other alternative locations in the Region or the City outside the urban boundary with good accessibility to an existing 400 series highway that would avoid prime agricultural lands or would be located on poorer agricultural lands.

The lands outside the City's urban boundary do include some poorer agricultural land which is designated "Rural Use Area" in the Official Plan. These lands are located in the Greenbelt west of Pine Valley Drive. As a consequence, employment uses and other urban uses are prohibited.

**4. Integrated for Planning for Infrastructure and Public Services**

Detailed planning for infrastructure and public service facilities will form part of the secondary and block plan processes. From the preliminary engineering analysis undertaken to date, it is anticipated that water and sewer services could potentially be extended from developing areas to the south to service the Study Area. While the Region is currently dealing with servicing capacity issues, in the medium to long term, there will be sufficient capacity to service the subject lands along with the other planned employment land areas in the Region.

Similarly, because of the proximity to the existing urban area, other municipal and regional services such as transit can be easily extended to the Study Area as required similar to other new development areas in the Region.

**5. Considers Cross-Jurisdictional Issues**

The only relevant cross-jurisdictional issue would be the potential impacts on King Township immediately to the north of the Study Area. Most of this area and in fact, most of King Township is designated as Protected Countryside under the Greenbelt Plan. The exception is a small area near the boundary which is outside of the Greenbelt area. An employment land area immediately to the south is not likely to have detrimental impacts on this area as nearby lands to the north are already designated for employment land uses.

## **6. Policies of Sections 2 and 3 of the PPS Were Also Reviewed**

The policies in Sections 2 and 3 of the PPS relate to matters such as the protection of natural heritage features and water quality and quantity. As discussed earlier, the Study Area contains Greenbelt lands and other identified natural features. The extent to which they represent constraints to development will be addressed in this study and in more detail as part of the secondary and block plan processes.

## **B. PROPOSAL ALSO MEETS REGIONAL CRITERIA FOR URBAN EXPANSION**

Many of the criteria contained in the *Region of York Official Plan* related to urban boundary expansions are similar to those in the PPS. The Highway 400 North urban expansion also meets the requirements of the Regional criteria.

### **1. Consistency with Regional Population and Employment Forecasts**

The Region's current employment land employment forecast is similar to the forecast recently produced as part of the *Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* which is to be used as input to the Province's *Places to Grow Plan*. In using either forecast, the same conclusion is reached: the Region has an insufficient supply of designated employment lands to meet long term needs.

### **2. Need For Expansion Relative To Other Land Available For Development in the Area Municipality**

The subject lands represent one of the last remaining opportunities in Vaughan and in York Region to designate a new employment land area with good accessibility to a 400 series highway. For employment land purposes, the majority of alternative options in the Region are inferior to the Study Area.

### **3. Role of the New Development Lands Identified in the Area Municipal Growth Management Strategies**

The City of Vaughan initiated this study of the potential to expand the urban boundary north along Highway 400 as a response to the need to provide additional employment lands. This area was not previously identified in any growth management strategy produced by the City or Region as being an area for future growth or an area excluded as a future urban area (excluding the Greenbelt lands).

### **4. Capability of the Area Municipality to Provide Growth Within the Urban Area**

Intensification of existing designated employment lands in Vaughan will be a long term process that will likely only accommodate a relatively small share of the total forecast employment land employment. In addition, the timing of development of lands accessed by the Highway 427 extension is uncertain given delays in the approval process. There are no other potential employment land areas within the existing urban boundary of Vaughan that are not already designated that would be equally attractive to employment land users.

## 5. Analysis of Options For Growth Direction and Sequencing

As discussed under the PPS criteria, there are no other options for additional employment lands that would result in the consumption of less valuable agricultural land. Identified natural features will be protected as part of the secondary plan for the urban expansion area. The Study Area immediately abuts currently developing areas and it is anticipated that sewer and water services could be extended. The main arterial road network for the area is already established. Transit service can be extended to the area from existing routes as the area begins to develop. Similarly, human services provision can be expanded to include the Study Area as required. More detailed study of these matters will form part of the secondary and block plan processes.

## 6. Protection of and Integration with the Regional Greenlands System

The Regional Greenlands system identifies a protected area similar to the *Greenbelt Plan* in the area west of Highway 400. These lands will be protected from development in the proposed secondary plan and adjacent land use designations will be carefully considered to ensure an appropriate interface with environmental areas.

## 7. The Amendment is Large Enough with Clear and Identifiable Boundaries

The Highway 400 North Study Area comprises over two full concession blocks with major arterial roads and the boundary with King Township as the boundaries. With a gross developable area of approximately 570 ha, the area is large enough to allow the development of marketable business parks that are able to offer a range of different parcel sizes and configurations.

## 8. Role of the Development Lands is Supportive of An Urban Structure of Centres and Corridors With Transit-Supportive Densities

The majority of the types of employment uses that would be accommodated in the Study Area are not of the type or density appropriate to the Region's Centres and Corridors. However, through the secondary plan process, consideration can be given to the Region's Centres and Corridors policies and their applicability to this area. Currently, the Regional Official Plan identifies Teston Road as an urban corridor. Jane Street and Weston Road within the urban area are also designated as urban corridors. Through the policies of the secondary plan and the provision of transit service, the Study Area would be able to contribute to the further viability of the regional transit system and the Centres and Corridors strategy.

## 9. Consistency with Other Policies in the Regional Official Plan

The urban expansion for additional employment lands supports a number of the Region's economic development policy objectives. In addition to general policy objectives related to maintaining and promoting a vibrant economy, Section 3.2 contains a number of policies related to attracting economic development to the Region:

- 3.2.1 To ensure that the physical needs of businesses are addressed including ensuring that a diversity of zoned sites are available
- 3.2.4 To recognize the importance of the manufacturing sector and to promote a full range of manufacturing in the Region.

The Highway 400 North urban expansion supports the Region's economic development policy objectives by allowing for the Region to be able to accommodate employment growth in the medium to long term and provide a new prestige employment land area to add to the diversity of employment opportunities in Vaughan and the Region.

Other policy directions in the Regional Official Plan related to specific issues such as protection of natural heritage and transportation will be addressed in the secondary and block plan processes.

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The Highway 400 North urban expansion meets the requirements of both the Provincial Policy Statement and York Region's criteria.

## V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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This report has assessed the proposed urban boundary expansion in the City of Vaughan for new employment lands along Highway 400. Our main conclusions are as follows:

- York Region requires additional employment lands beyond the existing designated supply to accommodate projected employment growth on employment lands.
- The Highway 400 North lands have excellent potential to become a successful employment land area. There are few alternative potential locations in the City of Vaughan or York Region with the same level of 400 series highway access and a central location.
- By not moving quickly to designate the Highway 400 North lands, the Region is at risk of not being able to provide an adequate employment land supply in the medium term. The timing of a large share of the future supply is uncertain.
- The strategic location of the subject lands along Highway 400 coupled with the already well-established employment land market in Vaughan will allow for the creation of a prestige employment area that could attract a range of employment uses and act as a prominent gateway into the City. The development of a comprehensive vision and related urban

design guidelines would also enhance the appearance of the Highway 400 corridor through the Study Area.

- The proposed urban expansion meets the comprehensive review criteria in the new *Provincial Policy Statement* and the requirements in the *Region of York Official Plan*.