

# **Contextualizing the Growth Plan: The Intersection of Regional Growth Management Planning and Smart Growth in a Suburban Region**

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## Abstract

The paper explores how regional growth management planning legislation and policies are rolled out on the ground at different levels of government in Ontario using the Region of Peel as a scenario. Further examined are the challenges associated with suburban sprawl and Ontario's response to addressing these challenges through the concept of smart growth to create complete communities, which became the underlying ideology of Ontario's first regional growth management policy framework *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006*. A review of Ontario's top-down planning system is undertaken to understand how municipalities make planning decisions to address the location and density of growth from the Province down to municipalities. The Region of Peel is reviewed along with the Official Plans of its lower-tier municipalities as a means of examining how upper-tier municipalities assist in coordinating growth amongst their lower-tier municipalities. Through first person interviews and secondary research, it uncovered that the Region of Peel has a limited role in the development process. My review indicated two potential explanations for the Region's limited role in the development review process which has affected its ability to enforce characteristics of complete communities in new developments. To help facilitate and encourage the development of complete communities through the development process, the Region of Peel implemented the *Healthy Development Assessment (HDA)* which provides recommendations during the development application process to create developments that are pedestrian-friendly, transit-supportive and have a mix of uses.

## Foreword

This Major Research paper has been submitted to York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies to satisfy the final requirements in the Masters in Environmental Studies (MES) Planning Program to obtain Ontario Professional Planners Institute of Ontario (OPPI) recognition. The theoretical and practical land use planning knowledge gained throughout the program, as well as the various internships coupled with my Major Research Paper, has allowed me to fulfill my Area of Concentration and Learning Objectives.

The paper is directly related to my research proposal entitled "Contextualizing the Growth Plan: The Contextualizing the Growth Plan: The Intersection of Regional Growth Management Planning and Smart Growth in a Suburban Region" and builds off my Plan of Study Area of Concentration, "Planning for Sustainability and Growth Management in Suburbs". Focusing on suburban sprawl, my Plan of Study allowed me to understand the historical reasoning behind suburban sprawl and its impacts on agriculture, the environment and public health. Through this interest, I continued to explore what policies have been implemented in Ontario to reduce such challenges. I began by reviewing the history of regional planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and its most effective policy framework to date *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006*. I focused my Major Research Paper on what underlying ideologies led to its inception of the Growth Plan, where it became clear that Smart Growth and its core goal of creating "Complete Communities" were the key driving forces behind the Plan's enactment. However, to understand how the Growth Plan was implemented, it was essential to have a thorough understanding of Ontario's land use planning system and how municipalities implement the policies of the Growth Plan through land use planning decisions. As a Region of Peel resident and having worked as an intern in the Region of Peel Development Services Division, I used the Region of Peel's Official Plan and as a means of examining how upper-tier municipalities assist in coordinating growth amongst their lower-tier municipalities. As such, I quickly learned the limited role the Region has when it comes to implementing policies surrounding complete communities during the development planning process and the role and responsibilities of upper tier municipalities.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

This paper examines the challenges associated with suburban sprawl and the response taken by the Province of Ontario to address these challenges through regional growth management planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. In doing so, the paper examines the enactment of Ontario's first regional growth management policy framework *The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006* (herein referred to as *Growth Plan*). The Growth Plan directs growth throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area and is grounded in principles of Smart Growth, most notably, complete communities. Since the inception of the first *Growth Plan* in 2006, its policies have had an impact on where and how the Greater Golden Horseshoe grows. At its core is the notion of "Complete Communities", aimed at meeting the daily needs of people through providing convenient access to a balanced mix of jobs, housing, local services, community infrastructure, and active and public modes of transportation.

Review of Ontario's top-down planning system is undertaken to understand how policies are imposed on municipalities to address the location and density of growth from the Province down to municipalities. This paper takes an in-depth look at the Region of Peel as a means of examining how upper-tier municipalities assist in coordinating growth amongst their lower-tier municipalities. To my surprise, it became apparent that the Region of Peel has a limited role in the development process. Through first-person interviews, a possible explanation was uncovered as to why the Region is unable to provide more policy direction to ensure developments incorporate characteristics associated with complete communities. To assist in developing more complete communities the Region of Peel implemented the *Healthy Development Assessment (HDA)* which provides recommendations during the development application process to create developments that are pedestrian friendly, transit supportive and have a mix of uses (Region of Peel, 2016).

### 1.1 Methodology

Several research methodologies were used to gather and analyze information for the purpose of this paper. These methods included interviews, secondary research, and the review of past and present planning policy and legislative documents. Planners from the Region of Peel provided insight into the development planning process at the Region in my interviews with them. In addition, several legislative and policy frameworks were analyzed which included: The Region of Peel Official Plan, City of Mississauga Official Plan, City of Brampton Official Plan, Town of

Caledon Official Plan, the *Planning Act*, Provincial Policy Statement, 2014, *The Municipal Act 2001*, *Places to grow Act, 2005* and several versions of Ontario's Growth Plan.

## **Chapter 2 – Suburban Sprawl**

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, what became known as suburban sprawl was the dominant method of planning discourse throughout most of North America (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck, 2001). By the 1960s, most Canadians lived in what is recognized today as suburbs. Yet, suburbs are not a new phenomenon as similar forms of development have been dated as far back as the medieval period (Harris, 2004). However, their function and form as well as the characteristics of their inhabitants have changed over time, impacted by various events such as World Wars and the Great Depression (Harris, 2004). Unlike urban areas that are typically compact, with mixed-use walkable neighbourhoods, suburbs are often perceived as being low density, single use neighbourhoods reliant on vehicles or regional transportation as the dominant method of travel. The following section examines the concept of suburban sprawl and the challenges associated with this form of growth.

### **2.1 What is Suburban Sprawl?**

Suburban sprawl is understood as a multidimensional concept which lacks a precise definition in the field of urban planning in North America. Over the last 70 years, many definitions of urban sprawl have emerged with several common characteristics. Essentially, it can be loosely defined as the outward expansion of human populations from a central settlement area. However, it is of importance to explore the many definitions that have come forth over the years to formulate a concept for the purpose of this paper. Most definitions describe suburban sprawl through a series of characteristics which can include: low densities; loss of rural agriculture, and open space; strip retail development; automobile-dependent development; development at the periphery of a core urban area; employment decentralization; and separation of land uses (Goetz, 2013).

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada describes suburban sprawl as the expanding of areas beyond their core, typically into rural areas distant from a city's central core or population density, with an over reliance on vehicles necessitating more roads and discouraging active transport as a daily mode of transportation (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018). Smart Growth America defines suburban sprawl as having four interconnected dimensions: widely dispersed low density development; rigidly separated workplaces, shops and homes; large road networks with limited options for walking or biking; and a lack of downtown cores or activity centres (Chen, Pendall, Ewing, 2002). The locality

of such development varies but generally occurs on undeveloped land known as greenfields, often disconnected from the existing urban fabric and distant from an urban core (Environmental Defense, 2013), and occurs at a rate in which the conversion of land to non-agricultural or non-natural uses exceeds the rate of population growth (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2002). Intrinsically, the streetscape of suburban sprawl typically encompasses wide streets and driveways, large parking lots, cul-de-sacs, single use development such as residential subdivisions or office parks and a lack of active or public transportation infrastructure (Elliot, Bray, Vakil, 2005). A commonality among these definitions is the reoccurring reference to built form and spatial configuration, yet each touch on different components of both. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, suburban sprawl is defined as the inefficient use of land with an automobile-centered, widely dispersed, low density built form, outside of a city's built up boundary where public and active transportation is often limited and ineffective as a method of daily travel.

The prominence of suburban sprawl as the dominant paradigm of urban growth can be attributed to several factors, but began during the 1930s and accelerated after the Second World War, when planning became centered around the automobile (Purdy, 2003). Some of the leading influences of suburban development are comprised of government policies, planners, development firms, the 1950s housing shortage and the booming automobile industry that began in the 1930s. Purdy explains how the post war era brought an unprecedented influx of migrants to major Canadian cities, particularly Toronto, creating a shortage and affordability issue in the City's housing market (Purdy, 2003). To address these issues in Toronto and other major Canadian cities, the federal government enacted several housing-related programs to boost the housing market (Purdy, 2003). Among the many initiatives enacted by the Canadian government, the two that strongly encouraged home ownership were mortgage insurance, introduced under the 1954 *National Housing Act* amendment, that allowed Canadians to place a 5% minimum down payment on a house instead of 20%, and later in the 1970, the Assisted Home Ownership Program under Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation which offered reduced interest loans to first time home buyers (Miron, 1989). These provisions made home ownership possible for a larger portion of the Canadian populace (Smith, 1974; Smith, 1968).

In turn, the housing industry boomed, offering people the ability to leave the strained inner-city to experience the less costly, clean and spacious attractive countryside on the edge of a dense area. However, the viability of these initiatives relied heavily on the co-relation between the



housing industry and the automobile. Peiser describes how the automobile was a key component in supporting the housing industry which gave way to the construction of infrastructure such as vast road networks, water, wastewater and stormwater systems (Peiser, 2001). As lands on urban peripheries began developing, so did the need for automobiles to make living in suburbs viable. Public transit was not seen as viable due the cost and time associated with building infrastructure outward, but the automobile was the perfect solution (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck, 2001). The automobile gave inhabitants of suburbs the ability to travel between the inner-city and its surrounding suburbs. This trend was complimented with zoning restrictions that strictly allowed low-density residential development, favoring single-use development as opposed to more interconnected compact mixed-use development (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck, 2001). Comparatively, it required suburbs to maintain a relationship with the inner-city for employment, services, retail and other life necessities through a system of nodes and corridors (Peiser, 2001). This necessitated a network of automobile-centric corridors which led to the construction of wide street configurations, supported by surface parking and major highway corridors.

Harvey points out how class struggle played a role in the suburban process, through its displacement from the physical workplace and diffusion into other aspects of life. He believes forms of housing have been extremely dependent on the demands and power of the labour workforce (Harvey, 1989). Class struggle is visibly and deeply infused into North America's neoliberal market-based system, where housing is offered as a commodity for purchase. Harvey highlights that the rise of suburbs not only offered a partial solution to over accumulation but also helped promote homeownership as a preferred norm (which was meant to ensure social stability) (Harvey, 1989). This dispersed people from the inner-city so that the "revolutionary dangers" of having a concentrated poor and working-class population in the inner-city could be addressed through renewal and reform (Harvey, 1989). Planning before the 1970s was understood as more of a public process, but with suburbs came the integration and domination of the private sector into planning, as the objectives of developers were more focused on the accumulation of profits, ignoring sustainability.

Moreover, Homer Hoyt's work in the 1960s can be acknowledged as an integral part of suburban growth in North America. Hoyt's "most significant contribution" was "understanding of why cities grow and the ability to forecast that growth (that) became the basis for a methodology that would determine the size and location of shopping centers" (Beauregard, 2007). It essentially

allowed him to formulate a system of linking market area, effective demand and a mix of retail that could be supported financially (Beauregard, 2007). Accordingly, it gave developers the tools to determine the size of shopping centres adequate enough to inform the growth of future surrounding residents (Beauregard, 2007). This form of residential density was intended to reduce the need of driving for shopping and services while creating small employment hubs. However, this form of urban growth failed to provide a pedestrian-friendly environment due to large arterial roads and vast swaths of asphalt surface parking that eroded walkability and favoured automobiles (Fillion, 2011). Effectively, these shopping centres served as catalysts for further growth, as inhabitants outside the urban envelope were now able to access suburban shopping centres and strip malls for daily life amenities such as groceries and retail shopping. As a result, sprawl continued consuming vast amounts of open space, valuable agricultural and ecologically sensitive land at an unprecedented rate in areas surrounding shopping centres.

Fillion notes that examples of such suburban master-planned developments are evident across Ontario, especially in the Region of Peel, home to shopping centres such as Bramalea Mall, Meadowvale Town Centre and Erin Mills Town Centre (Fillion, 2011). For instance, Mississauga's Erin Mills Town Centre was developed as a "new town" designed to "encompass everything a family could want" and was to be a "communal area... designed for people to interact and form strong community bonds" at the centre of the Erin Mills community (Heritage Mississauga, 2018). Completed in 1989, the shopping centre sat in the middle of mostly farmland (*figure 1*), which has since been developed into suburban neighbourhoods (*figure 2*). While not directly connected to Hoyt's work, it resembles a very similar approach in how shopping centres were used as anchors to support surrounding growth. Regrettably, as seen in *figure 2*, although promoted as a community, the shopping centre is surrounded by single use residential districts with a few schools where automobiles appear to dominate the landscape. Prevalent in the past, today, urban sprawl is associated with a wide range of environmental and public health challenges.



*Figure 1: 1989 Aerial photo of Erin Mills Town Centre outlined in red (City of Mississauga Interactive Online Mapping Service, 2019).*



*Figure 2: 2019 Aerial photo of Erin Mills Town Centre outlined in red (City of Mississauga Interactive Online Mapping Service, 2019).*

## **2.2 The Consequences of Suburban Sprawl**

There are several environmental, agricultural and public health concerns associated with the built form and spatial configuration engrained in suburban sprawl (Thompson, 2013). The relationship between the built environment and public health has existed for centuries. In the early 1900s, the relationship was focused on moving people to less polluted areas to improve sanitation and overcrowding that led to infectious diseases (Tarr, 1994). Many people moved to suburbs in order to escape the perceived “ills of the city” that were associated with the cluttered industrial inner-city during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Tarr, 1994). Clear connections have emerged that

one's health is influenced by the environment they live in. At first, there appeared to be many benefits associated with suburban life such as less noise and air pollution, a greater experience of nature and less overcrowding (Canada Walks, 2009). However, over time a growing body of evidence suggested that the negative health impacts outweigh the benefits associated with living in a suburban community.

The spatial configuration of sprawling development requires inhabitants to rely on driving as the main mode of transportation, as different land uses such as housing, offices, retail stores, recreational facilities and public spaces are often spatially separated from each other. Sprawling neighbourhoods are difficult to walk and cycle through due to their winding streets and cul-de-sac road configurations connected by arterial roads favoring vehicles, with few shops and services within walking or cycling distance (Environmental Defence, 2013). Evidence shows that people who live-in spread-out neighbourhoods have higher rates of physical inactivity and are less likely to take active transportation, weigh more, and suffer from diabetes, respiratory, cardio-vascular and other diseases, in contrast to people who live in higher-density mixed-use neighbourhoods (Ewing, McCann, 2003). The biggest health concern in suburban neighbourhoods is the lack of physical activity as exercise is not worked into one's daily activities, making healthy habits less and less a part of daily life (Autler, Belzer, 2002). Being overweight is a well-established factor for heart disease, stroke and some cancers (Gurin, 2004). Studies have indicated that overweight individuals die prematurely at as much as 2.5 the rate of others (Gurin, 2004). It was also found that "walking 10 blocks per day or more is associated with a 33 percent lower risk of cardio-vascular disease." (Gurin, 2004).

The reliability on vehicles also increases the number of vehicles on the road which in turn burn billions of litres of gasoline and emit millions of tons of pollution in the form of sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides and carbon monoxide, all contributing to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) (Gurin, 2004). These pollutants are classified as air contaminants and have an immediate impact on the environment and human health. From a human health perspective, these pollutants have been linked to lung damage, reducing breathing functions and sensitizing airways to irritants and allergens, as well as cardiovascular-related complications such as heart disease (Gurin, 2004). In 2007, a study examining residential GHG emissions in the Greater Toronto Area showed how suburbs had an average emission rate of almost four times that of areas in the central core, mainly due to vehicle emissions (VandeWeghe, Kennedy, 2008). In addition to the health implications,

the increase in vehicle use has led to more traffic congestion, consequently increasing accidents involving motorists, cyclists and pedestrians (Elliot, Bray, Vakil, 2005). Those who live in suburbs also have a higher risk of mental health complications associated with longer commute times, contributing to higher occurrences of stress-related anxiety and road rage incidents (Elliot, Bray, Vakil, 2005).

From an environmental degradation viewpoint, suburban sprawl has a significant impact on natural heritage and hydrological systems. A major environmental concern related to sprawl development is the rapid consumption of large swaths of land located outside a city's urban envelope (Gargiulo, Sateriano, Di Bartolomei, Salvati, 2013). The concept of "urban metabolism" put forward by ecologist Eugene Odum fits well with suburban sprawl. Odum describes cities as "living organisms" explaining how cities would be non-existent without clean air, water and food (Tarr, 2002). At first, these necessities came from the inner-city but as they developed and matured, more land and resources are needed, further extending society's ecological footprint. He further portrays a city as a parasite on its surrounding natural and domesticated environments as it reshapes and consumes the surrounding land (Tarr, 2002). Although focused on the industrial city of the past, the concept still applies today when examining the inefficient and vast consumption of indispensable land associated with suburban sprawl.

The Greater Golden Horseshoe (*figure 3*) is surrounded by some of Canada's most ecologically and hydrologically significant natural environments that provide important ecosystem services such as carbon storage, water filtration, waste treatment, flood control and wildlife habitat (Ontario, 2017). As sprawl continues, it eats away at green space, valuable ecosystem services are lost and instead paved with impervious concrete surfaces. As a result, animal habitats diminish, trees are cut down, and water that once went into wetlands, lakes or rivers are now drained into sewers or engineered stormwater ponds (Environmental Defence, 2013).

Another challenge sprawl poses is the depletion of valuable farmland. As sprawl development continues, surrounding farmland will likely decline due to the high rate of land consumption at a city's undeveloped hinterlands. For instance, many undeveloped areas on the outskirts of the Greater Golden Horseshoe are used for agricultural purposes, recognized as some of the highest-quality farmland in Canada (Allen, Campsie 2013). Preventing sprawl growth into these hinterlands has been a challenge since the 1970s. In fact, between 1976 and 1996, the Greater Toronto Area lost an area of farmland equivalent to the size of the City of Toronto (Hare, 2001).

As farmland becomes more distant, produce derived from local sources are diminished, adding to the issue of regional food security. It necessitates more produce to be imported from further locations, ultimately, increasing traffic and the consumption of fossil fuels through vehicle usage (Environmental Defence, 2013).

Suburban sprawl was initially perceived as a solution for the “ills of the city” such as; overcrowding, lack of proper sanitation and pollution. In reality, suburban sprawl created a positive feedback loop of automobile dependency, health issues and environmental degradation. As the severe implications of sprawl became recognized amongst planners, academics and governments there was an ideological shift towards the development of “complete communities”. Complete communities are based on the principles of Smart Growth, characterized by a compact urban form, a wide range of local land uses and reduced automobile dependency. The following section explores how the Province of Ontario introduced legislation and planning policies that require upper, lower and single tier municipalities to manage growth based on the fundamentals of Smart Growth.

## **Chapter 3 – Implementing Smart Growth Concepts in Ontario**

### **3.1 Smart Growth in Ontario**

The formal and legal intersection of inter-regional planning and growth management in the Greater Golden Horseshoe can be largely accredited to the Smart Growth ideology. During the 1990s, Smart Growth was an emerging planning ideology gaining momentum in the United States (Goetz, 2005). Smart Growth is coined as an urban planning and transportation theory that is perceived as the polar opposite of suburban sprawl. In general, it is loosely defined as the creation of complete communities that encompass compact, walkable urban areas, which encourage transit-oriented development, mixed-use developments, environmental conservation and a full range of housing types. At its core is the notion of integrating the public into the planning process (Goetz, 2005).

When examining Smart Growth, it can be dissected into 6 main elements which include: (1) planning, (2) transportation, (3) economic development, (4) housing, (5) community development and (6) environmental perseveration (Ye, Mandpe, Meyer, 2005). The (1) planning element of smart growth embodies effective growth management and comprehensive planning, that encompasses mixed land use planning, sustainable designs, denser urban form, street connectivity, enhancement of public facilities and recreational areas, and infrastructure improvement (Ye, Mandpe, Meyer, 2005). Its (2) transportation component focuses on providing people with numerous safe and well-connected options such as public transit, walking, and cycling, in order to reduce car usage and dependency. It encourages better coordination between land use and transportation planning, through regional systems integration and nodal networks to improve the quality of transit service, and promotes better connectivity concerning pedestrian, transit, bike and road infrastructure (Ye, Mandpe, Meyer, 2005).

Another element of Smart Growth is (3) economic development, which aims to improve and encourage neighbourhood businesses, revitalize downtown cores, utilize existing infrastructure and encourage infill development (Ye, Mandpe, Meyer, 2005). The (4) housing and (5) community components advocate for developments with various forms of housing on smaller lots, with multi-family dwellings, unique neighbourhood characteristics, central communal areas and public involvement during the planning process (Ye, Mandpe, Meyer, 2005). At the core of Smart Growth and its increased density is (6) environmental preservation, encompassing the

protection of valuable countryside, agricultural lands, and ecologically sensitive lands to preserve animal habitats and natural heritage features (Ye, Mandpe, Meyer, 2005).

Yet, it was not until 2001 that Smart Growth became the Ontario provincial government's slogan of a citizen-led solution to rapid suburban sprawl (Fillion, 2011). The government of Mike Harris launched the 'Central Smart Growth Panel' consisting of appointed members from both public and private organizations. In 2003, the panel released its final recommendation report titled *Shape the Future* with visions for urban intensification that embodied a denser, mixed-use built form as the solution for future developments (Ontario, 2003). The Report also recognized the link between land use, air pollution, and the importance of denser urban centres connected by interregional transit corridors (Winfield, 2003). The six Smart Growth principles mentioned above are inherent within the Report encouraging the use of existing servicing systems and roads, discouraging growth in significant agricultural and environmentally sensitive land, and the development of more sustainable forms of transportation, through the use of growth management strategies (Ontario, 2003). Smart Growth quickly became the provincial government's tool for raising awareness of the significant impact suburban sprawl posed, with Smart Growth as a solution.

Although Mike Harris's provincial government set the platform, it was the provincial government of Dalton McGuinty's Places to Grow initiative in 2004 that established provincially-directed regional growth management planning into municipalities. The initiative was developed through the research of the Greater Golden Horseshoe Committee, evolving Mike Harris's provincial government version of the *Shape Our Future* report, where it carried forward and noted the importance of Smart Growth (Fillion, 2011). The discussion paper further raised issues surrounding automobile-oriented low-density outward growth that became the planning paradigm in the 1980s and 1990s. In particular, the Report documented that if the Greater Golden Horseshoe continued to develop as it did in the 1980s and 1990s, there would be negative social, financial and environmental implications, three factors that make the area attractive for economic growth and new residents (Fillion, 2011). Studies indicated that traffic congestion would worsen, a significant amount of high-quality agricultural land would be lost, and environmental degradation would be substantial. If continued, by 2031, development would consume approximately 1000 km<sup>2</sup> of high-quality agricultural land (Allen, Campsie 2013).



Decisively, in 2005 the *Places to Grow Act, 2005* was enacted by the provincial government, followed by the final approved version of the *Growth Plan* in 2006. The core function of policies in the *Growth Plan*, were to prevent or mitigate issues associated with automobile-oriented low-density outwards growth by redirecting growth into already built-up areas and urban centres. The *Growth Plan*, was unlike any previous regional plans, intersecting characteristics of regional planning connected through Smart Growth while illustrating the importance of a top-down approach in land use planning. In essence, it established the Province as the inter-regional planning authority for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, implemented through both suggestive and prescriptive regional growth management policies that encompass Smart Growth ideals aimed at creating complete communities.

### **3.2 The Notion of Complete Communities**

Among the six pillars of Smart Growth, Ye, Mandpe & Meyer note that community development within the Smart Growth ideology aims to foster mixed-use developments, a more compact urban fabric, accessible transportation and a mix of housing types into both new and existing communities (Ye, Mandpe, Meyer, 2005). The realization of such a community with the aforementioned characteristics is known as Complete Communities. Although it is considered a contemporary planning approach, Complete Communities is not new as the concept has existed for decades (Grant, 2002).

Principally, Complete Communities can be first seen as a planning concept during the Garden City Movement, which was first unveiled by Ebenezer Howard in 1898 (Eden 1947, Osborn 1950). Since then, architects, planners, designers, and engineers have continued the evolution of urban planning towards sustainability in an effort to curb the negative effects of planning practices, such as suburban sprawl. Although the broad definition of Complete Communities is fundamentally tied to the outcome of a community that incorporates Smart Growth ideals, the concept's applicability can vary depending on a community's existing built form. When looking at the concept of Complete Communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe's regional growth plan *A Place to Grow*, they are defined as:

Places such as mixed-use neighbourhoods or other areas within cities, towns, and *settlement areas* that offer and support opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently access most of the necessities for daily living, including an appropriate mix of jobs, local stores, and services, a full range of housing, transportation options and *public*

*service facilities. Complete communities* are age-friendly and may take different shapes and forms appropriate to their contexts (Ontario, 2019).

The definition points out that Complete Communities “may take different shapes and forms appropriate to their context” acknowledging that the applicability of complete community is dependent on the existing built environment and infrastructure within a municipality (Ontario, 2019). During both of the interviews I conducted, the interviewees explained how in a municipality that is largely rural, achieving high-order transit or active transportation infrastructure would prove difficult due to a smaller population and low density, spread-out spatial configuration. In a rural neighbourhood, high order transit or active transportation would not be seen as a priority component in creating a complete community. Instead, the need for a broader range of housing options, service centres, and community facilities to better accommodate the rural environment would take precedence. In contrast, a municipality with a compact built environment would perceive high order transit or active transportation as core components in creating a complete community, as it would be an effective form of everyday transportation. As a result, more resources would be directed towards improving high order transit (Region of Peel Interviewee, February 20, 2020). Overall, Complete Communities can be understood as the overarching outcome of implementing Smart Growth principles in land use planning but could vary depending the predominantly existing built form.

## **Chapter 4 – Regional Planning and Growth Management in the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In order to gain a better understanding of the intersection between regional planning and growth management in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, it is essential to understand the difference between the two concepts. Regional planning embodies planning for a geographic area that transcends the boundary of an individual town or city, sharing common economic, social, political, cultural and transportation goal (2002). It encompasses the efficient placement of infrastructure, land use activities and settlement growth through the establishment of regional planning agencies and subsequently regional comprehensive plans (American Planning Association, 2002). Growth management on the other hand typically involves the implementation of regulatory policies to influence how and where growth occurs to better align with future infrastructure and capital budgets. These policies are strategically implemented to guide growth in different areas through a combination of land uses, different forms of density, and timing of development (Downs, 2003). As such, growth management is considered as a political and technical tool for guiding development beyond traditional geopolitical boundaries.

In Ontario, the province plays a key role in regional planning and growth management, one that allows it to create planning regions within its boundaries. In Canada, planning regions do not have explicit status and must be created if deemed necessary by the Province (Robinson, Hodge, 2001). The Province exercises authority by allocating resources to matters of regional interest, such as regional transit to help service and connect different areas. Robinson and Hodge note that the province plays a vital role in regional planning by: allocating resources; setting the boundaries of a planning region; coordinating actions and decisions; and developing a region-wide governance mechanism (Robinson, Hodge, 2001). However, with this legislative authority comes the responsibility of dealing with both regional planning and growth management challenges which can include: setting regional boundaries and modifying them to cope with development pressure and change; allocating the appropriate amount of resources to cities and the region so that they can implement their plans, and address collective needs and issues; creating region-wide governance mechanisms; and ensuring that provincial decisions align with the planning goals and projected actions of the region and respective cities (Robinson, Hodge, 2001).

Over the last several decades, the Greater Golden Horseshoe (*Figure 3*) has undergone immense development, turning it into one of North America's most dynamic and rapidly growing regions (Ontario, 2019). Located in southern Ontario, the Greater Golden Horseshoe covers approximately 32,000 square kilometres which include cities, small villages, towns and rural areas (Allen, Campsie, 2013). It is Canada's largest urbanized area, accounting for nearly one third of the total Canadian populace (Allen, Campsie, 2013). Along with the rapid growth the region has experienced, administratively, there have been many changes to how governments at the municipal level function, especially from a regional planning perspective. A lack of growth coordination amongst municipalities in Peel emphasized the importance of a comprehensive regional land use approach. When examining the Greater Golden Horseshoe today, it is apparent that regional planning and growth management has become a staple in directing where and how Regions should grow. Historically, regional planning was available, with unsuccessful attempts in the 1940s and 1970s. However, these two previous attempts, coupled with a progressive planning ideology, contributed to the formation of today's inter-regional governance structure, and subsequently, inter-regional growth management legislation and plans.



Figure 3: The Greater Golden Horseshoe (Allen, Campsie, 2013)

## 4.2 History of Regional Planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

Regional planning across municipal boundaries was first introduced in the Toronto metropolitan region during the Second World War, as a result of the war-related economic expansion in Toronto. Factories along Toronto's waterfront brought in raw materials and shipped out products, employing thousands of people (White, 2007). Although many factories were located by the waterfront, several others began to emerge in other locations throughout the metropolitan

area, such as Malton, in Mississauga, and Scarborough. These facilities employed thousands of workers that preferred to reside closer to where they worked. As such, several smaller communities around these facilities began to emerge. It quickly became evident that the coordination of housing, physical infrastructure and land use was needed. In 1943, the 'Master Plan for the City of Toronto and the Environs' was created (White, 2007). A significant amount of the Plan was concerned with improving the City of Toronto through downtown modernization, adding open space and parks, and renewing declining areas. However, the Plan also addressed several important regional matters, it called for substantial growth of surrounding townships, and a network of superhighways and rapid transit lines within the city and beyond into its suburban townships (White, 2007).

Soon after the Second World War, in 1946, the provincial government passed the first effective planning legislation known as the *Planning Act*. Unlike previous attempts that had "few teeth" in terms of effectiveness and authority, the *Planning Act* gave municipalities the power to create their own long-term policy framework with set objectives for their jurisdictions (White, 2007). White notes that the *Planning Act* is recognized as the most important event in planning history. Many municipalities, including the City of Toronto, immediately created and passed official plans to guide growth within their jurisdictions (White, 2007). The *Planning Act* also allowed the creation of joint planning boards with surrounding municipal jurisdictions in an effort to better coordinate growth. These planning boards inadvertently created an informal regional planning body that did not focus on city building but instead on how to manage growth on the undeveloped outskirts of the City of Toronto and surrounding municipalities. However, it was not until 1954 that the provincial government created the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Board (MTPB) to address pressing issues associated with growth in the metropolitan area. The MTPB planning area encompassed 13 municipalities as well as 12 villages and rural municipalities located outside its defined boundaries (White, 2007). The MTPB was responsible for many aspects of physical planning, such as parks and open space, transportation (public transit and highways), board land use designations, and water and sewer infrastructure. One of its key purposes was to create an official plan for the planning area, which although created, was never implemented (White, 2007).

Although a draft official plan was completed in 1959 for Toronto and surrounding municipalities, refined and rereleased in 1965, it was never implemented. In 1966, the MTPB decided to leave it as a non-official *Metropolitan Plan* due to disagreements between

municipalities coupled with the complexity and rapid growth in new areas throughout its boundaries (White, 2007). Many of the disagreements resulted from the attempted two-tier system where the *Metropolitan Plan* was not entirely aligned with the official plans created by local municipalities, together with the uncertainty of where growth would transpire. By the late 1960s, the built form of the City of Toronto and its townships changed drastically, as many were now largely built out not entirely aligning with *Metropolitan Plan* (White, 2007). While the *Metropolitan Plan* was never formally implemented, many of its core planning principles are still evident in regional plans today. One strategy involved creating a regional transportation network with arterial roads, expressways and public transit to connect encircling municipalities. Keeping with this was the idea of having higher densities in the inner core of municipalities and employment nodes throughout the metropolitan area. Another important strategy was permit development where hard infrastructure such as sewers and water were located or planned to be built as part of the development.

During the mid-1960s, the Province entered the Toronto regional planning scene with the Toronto-Centered Region planning concept. While never identified as a plan *per se*, the model covered an area much larger than the MTPB jurisdiction. A key planning principle in the scheme was the notion of forecasting population and employment growth in alignment with water and wastewater infrastructure systems to the year 2000, connected by a network of regional transportation corridors (White, 2007). The projections were divided into three zones moving outwards from the City of Toronto. Higher population and employment figures were projected for inner urban zone one and employment-oriented zone three, with intermediate zone two left mostly rural for future growth. The concept plan helped to some degree understand the immense area in question, yet was too comprehensive at a time where government intervention to implement its goals would not be accepted by the public, coupled with a lack of public consultation while developing the scheme (White, 2007). While never authoritatively implemented, the Toronto-Centered Region concept brought forth the notion of population and employment forecasting within defined areas directing how and where growth would transpire, connected through a regional transportation network. In this, it was the first attempt at a regional planning scheme interconnected with growth management.

In the mid-1970s, the provincial government made several changes to the structure of municipal governments with the introduction of bodies as regional municipalities, leading to the

disassembly of the MTPB. The intention of this change was to allow for greater economies of scale, reduction in service delivery and tax burden, and creating a planning authority to align future development within its jurisdiction, which comprised of various lower-tier municipalities (White, 2007). The *Municipal Act 2001* outlines the rules for all municipalities in Ontario, excluding the City of Toronto, and provides municipalities with the power to pass by-laws and govern their respective jurisdictions. Section 11 (11) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* delineates the services upper-tier municipalities are responsible for coordinating and providing amongst lower-tier municipalities. For example, section 11(11) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, outlines that the Region of Peel is responsible for waste management, sewage treatment, collection of sewage and water distribution.

The creation of a planning authority for upper-tier municipalities to coordinate planning amongst its lower-tier counterparts contributed to the execution and governance of growth management strategies and upper-tier official plans within their respective mandated legislative boundaries. Prior to the introduction of upper-tier governments, municipalities would individually coordinate development with minimal regard to the built form of neighbouring municipalities (Fillion, Bunting, 2006). Inherently, growth management became a planning and administrative means of coordinating and supporting the development process in a broader scope. Although the notion of growth management had emerged, the Greater Golden Horseshoe was still lacking a single inter-regional body that would coordinate growth among two-tier and single-tier municipalities. White points out how up until the late 1970s, the implementation of a regional planning body was difficult to employ in Ontario due to the “competition, strength and depth” of self-governance within municipalities (White, 2007). As a result of the misalignment among municipal growth agendas and no regional planning body to coordinate growth, urban sprawl hit unprecedented levels in the Greater Golden Horseshoe from the 1970s to 1990s. Its accompanied impacts became apparent, raising concern among the Region’s inhabitants, which ultimately contributed to the awareness and need for a solution (White, 2007). As such, the subsequent pages take a deeper dive into the events and ideology that gave way to the inception of the Greater Golden Horseshoe’s regional growth management planning body and regulatory policies that emerged in the 1990s.



## **Chapter 5 – Legislative Authority of A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe – How is it implemented in Land Use Planning?**

So far, this paper has analyzed the impact of suburban sprawl on communities, residents, agricultural land and the environment along with its role in shifting planning ideologies toward concepts of Smart Growth. It then explored the implementation of policies associated with Smart Growth and Complete Communities through different Provincial policies. It continued by outlining the history and role of Regional Planning and Growth Management and changes that were made to municipal governance such as the development and differentiation of upper and lower tier municipalities. It is imperative to outline how provincial legislation and plans provide high level land use objectives that municipalities are required to implement through their respective Official Plans, Zoning by-laws and other land use related decisions. Formulating an understanding of Ontario's land use planning system will help understand how policies surrounding complete communities are implemented.

### *Planning Act*

Section 1.1 of the *Planning Act* outlines the purpose of the legislation including, “to provide for a land use planning system led by provincial policy” and “to integrate matters of provincial interest in provincial and municipal planning decisions”. The legislation creates a top-down approach by requiring the decisions of municipalities to reflect the land use planning policies prescribed by the *Planning Act*.

The *Planning Act* clearly defines and legislates matters of provincial interest through provincial policies and ‘Provincial Plans’ which are implemented through upper, single and lower-tier municipal Official Plans and other decisions. Municipalities in Ontario are subject to the *Planning Act*, and must conform to the legislative requirements found within. Section 1 (1) of the Act, outlines that “a growth plan approved under the Places to Grow Act, 2005” is defined as a Provincial Plan. When updating an Official Plan, Section 26.1(a) notes that the council of a municipality is required to ensure their Official Plan conforms with provincial plans or does not conflict with them. General areas of ‘Provincial Interest’ (section 2) found in the *Planning Act* purposely correlate with the ‘Guiding Principles’ (section 1.2.1) of *A Place to Grow* (Ontario, 2019). Some examples of ‘Provincial Interest’ mirror the characteristics of smart communities, such as: the development of safe and healthy communities and the promotion of a built form that

is well designed, adequate employment opportunities and safe, accessible and attractive public spaces (Ontario, 1990).

### Provincial Policy Statement

As per Section 3(1) of the *Planning Act*, the Minister of Municipal Affairs of Housing may issue a policy statement regarding matters related to municipal planning, which the Minister deems to be of ‘provincial interest’. Those policy statements and Provincial Plans administered by the Minister serve as a legally binding policies that establish minimum requirements for local planning authorities to address planning matters, the Planning Act provides:

- 3 (5) A decision of the council of a municipality, a local board, a planning board, a minister of the Crown and a ministry, board, commission or agency of the government, including the Tribunal, in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter,
- (a) shall be consistent with the policy statements issued under subsection (1) that are in effect on the date of the decision; and
  - (b) shall conform with the provincial plans that are in effect on that date, or shall not conflict with them, as the case may be. (Planning Act, 1990)

The *Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS), “provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development... sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land.” The PPS lays out its relationship with provincial plans like the *Greenbelt Plan* and *A Place to Grow*, stating that provincial plans are built on the policies found in the PPS as a means of addressing issues throughout Ontario’s unique geographic areas. Section 4 of the PPS titled ‘Implementation and Interpretation’, outlines that Provincial Plans, like the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act*, *Greenbelt Act* and *Places to Grow Act*, “shall be read in conjunction with this Provincial Policy Statement and take precedence over policies in this Provincial Policy Statement to the extent of any conflict, except where legislation establishing *provincial plans* provides otherwise.”

Throughout the PPS, there are explicit references to policies and objectives found within *A Place to Grow* specifically focusing on Growth Areas and Settlement Areas. Section 1.1.3 of the PPS entitled ‘Settlement Areas’, outlines that land use planning should; promote efficient development patterns, protect resources and effectively use infrastructure (Ontario, 2014). Policy 1.1.3.2 of the PPS further expands on land use patterns in settlement areas, stating; they will have a mix of densities and land uses, efficient uses of land, avoid the need for uneconomical expansion,

support active transportation and are transit and freight supportive (Ontario, 2014). Similarly, *A Place to Grow* policy 2.2.1.2 (c) states that within settlement areas, growth will be directed towards built-up areas, growth areas, locations with existing and/or planned transit, and places with existing or planned public service facilities (Ontario, 2014). The PPS and *A Place to Grow* both provide similar direction regarding the expansion of settlement boundaries, by requiring a settlement boundary area expansion to only occur through a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR). Although the PPS was a step forward in recognizing linkages among policy areas, its high-level policies did not seem to provide the necessary planning policy “teeth” required to create complete communities and sub-regional coordinated growth. A more prescriptive planning policy framework was needed, which led to the enactment of the *Places to Grow Act, 2005* and subsequently, the Growth Plan. The Plan encouraged planning upward rather than outwards through setting employment and density targets along with prescriptive formulas that must be met before expanding into greenfields, amongst other land use requirements, for areas across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

#### *Places to Grow Act 2005 and Growth Plan*

Section 1 of the *Places to Grow Act 2005* sets out four main purposes which guide land use planning and growth in Ontario:

- (a) to enable decisions about growth to be made in ways that sustain a robust economy, build strong communities and promote a healthy environment and a culture of conservation;
- (b) to promote a rational and balanced approach to decisions about growth that builds on community priorities, strengths and opportunities and makes efficient use of infrastructure;
- (c) to enable planning for growth in a manner that reflects a broad geographical perspective and is integrated across natural and municipal boundaries;
- (d) to ensure that a long-term vision and long-term goals guide decision-making about growth and provide for the co-ordination of growth policies among all levels of government. (Ontario, 2005)

On May 16, 2019, through an Order in Council (641/2019), the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC) approved *A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. These four ‘main purposes’ of the *Places to Grow Act* are pragmatically implemented throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe through *A Place to Grow*. *A Place to Grow* has its legislative basis in the *Places to Grow Act 2005*, ensuring land use planning throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe, comprised of over 100 municipalities, foster complete communities, a strong economy and clean

environment (Ontario, 2019). *A Place to Grow* requires municipalities to implement policies in their official plans to implement the goals of the plan, aiding in the development of complete communities amongst other initiatives.

#### Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws

*A Place to Grow* replaced the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (2017) and as of May 16, 2019 municipalities must conform with the policies found in *A Place to Grow*, with the exception of *A Place to Grow* policy 2.2.2.2, “Until the next municipal comprehensive review is approved and in effect, the annual minimum intensification target contained in the applicable upper- or single-tier official plan that is approved and in effect as of July 1, 2017 will continue to apply.” (Ontario, 2019). There are various policies in place to ensure upper, lower and single-tier municipal Official Plan’s conform to *A Place to Grow*. Official Plan conformity for municipalities is governed through Section 12(1) of the *Places to Grow Act*, and Section 3(5) of the *Planning Act* “The council of a municipality or a municipal planning authority that has jurisdiction in an area to which a growth plan applies shall amend its official plan to conform with the growth plan.” (Ontario, 2005). Council and/or municipal planning authorities have up until the third anniversary date of which the Growth Plan came into effect to conform with the Plan (Ontario, 2005).

These targets are imposed to address suburban sprawl by ensuring growth occurs within the existing urban built up areas, effectively concentrating growth. Intensification targets are an essential tool to development to high-density areas, which is a key characteristic of complete communities. Official Plan policies pertaining to growth and intensification targets as set out by *A Place to Grow* are not subject to appeal, an important policy mechanism to safeguard Provincial growth requirements. Section 24 (5) of the *Planning Act* titled, “Right to Appeal” states there is no appeal to any part of an Official Plan that:

- b) identifies forecasted population and employment growth as set out in a growth plan that,
  - (i) is approved under the *Places to Grow Act*, 2005, and
  - (ii) applies to the Greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan area designated in Ontario Regulation 416/05 (Growth Plan Areas) made under that Act;

*A Place to Grow* further outlines that the intensification and density targets, settlement boundaries and employment designations identified in the plan, will remain in effect for all upper and single-tier Official Plans until the MCR is approved and in effect. Municipalities are subject to Provincial

Plan conformity exercises as per Section 26 (2.1) of the *Planning Act*, to ensure provincial plans are reflected at the regional and local level.

Land uses are further regulated throughout local municipalities through the use of Zoning By-laws. PPS policy 4.8, recognizes the importance of local level planning mechanisms to implement policies of provincial significance, it therefore requires municipal zoning by-laws and development permits to be in line with their respective Official Plans as well as the PPS (Ontario, 2014). Zoning by-law and Official Plan conformity is a legislated requirement as per the *Planning Act* Section 26(9): “No later than three years after a revision under subsection (1) or (8) comes into effect, the council of the municipality shall amend all zoning by-laws that are in effect in the municipality to ensure that they conform with the official plan.” *A Place to Grow* directly outlines the pivotal role Zoning By-laws have with respect to achieving a number of the Growth Plan’s policies, especially those which deal with complete communities. Section 2.2.2.3 (f) of *A Place to Grow* states that delineated built up areas will be implemented within Official Plan policies and designations and updated zoning (Ontario, 2019). Zoning by-laws will assist in prioritizing and implementing the priority transit corridors and station areas shown in schedule 5 of the *A Place to Grow* (Ontario, 2019). Section 2.2.5.13 states that upper and single-tier municipalities in collaboration with lower-tier municipalities will identify and establish minimum density targets for all employment areas within settlement areas, those targets will be “implemented through official plan policies and designations and zoning by-laws” (Ontario, 2019). Similar to employment areas, Section 2.2.6 states that all three levels of municipalities will support housing choices to achieve density targets and 2.2.6.1 (d) outlines that those targets will be achieved through “official plan policies and designations and zoning by-laws.” (Ontario, 2019).

The *Planning Act* in Ontario sets out the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario. It describes how land uses may be controlled, and who may control them. The Provincial Policy Statement establishes the minimum standards for land use planning in Ontario. Together the Planning Act and PPS lay out the basic ground rules and minimum requirements for land use planning in Ontario. The goals of the province are further detailed through Provincial Plans, which are “detailed and geographically-specific policies to meet certain objectives, such as managing growth” (Ontario, 2019). At the municipal level, Official Plans are required to conform or “not conflict” with the policies in Provincial plans. Provincial Plans, particularly *A Place to Grow*, have a number of policies related to the development of complete communities, such as: concentrating

development to Urban Growth Centres, encouraging jobs and housing within Major Transit Station Areas. These types of intensification-based policies exemplify how the Growth Plan assists in developing communities that are dense, walkable and accessible by public transit. This hierarchical approach ensures that municipalities are making planning decisions at the local level that develop into complete communities.

## **Chapter 6 – Implementing A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

The vision for *A Place to Grow 2019* includes, “the achievement of complete communities with access to transit networks, protected employment zones and an increase in the amount and variety of housing available.” The Growth Plan can be understood as a policy framework that provides several land use objectives related to complete communities. From a high level, *A Place to Grow 2019* sets requirements for minimum intensification and density targets and directs intensification towards settlement areas and urban growth centres which are planned to be mixed-use, transit supportive communities with a diversity of housing options. When these different policy objectives (Urban Growth Centres, Delineated Built up Areas, MTSA’s etc.) are simultaneously implemented, they incrementally develop a built form based on complete community characteristics (walkable, high density, transit accessible and mixed-use). Section 2 of *A Place to Grow* outlines ‘Where and How to Grow’, by providing eight policy areas to instruct upper- and single-tier municipalities on how to plan for growth (Ontario, 2019). They are set out below:

### *Delineated Built-up Areas*

Built-up areas are within a community’s settlement area that are already developed. *A Place to Grow* requires municipalities to accommodate residential and employment growth through intensification within the delineated built-up area. *A Place to Grow* Policy 2.2.2.1 (a) outlines a minimum intensification target of 50% for all residential development to be located within the delineated built-up area of the following Cities: “Barrie, Brantford, Guelph, Hamilton, Orillia and Peterborough and the Regions of Durham, Halton, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo and York;” (Ontario, 2019). Municipalities are currently undertaking the MCR process to ensure their Official Plans conform to *A Place to Grow*. Important to note is that, *A Place to Grow* Policy 2.2.2.2, states that until the next MCR is approved and implemented, the minimum intensification targets found in upper- or single-tier Official plans that were approved and in effect as of July 1, 2017 will continue to apply (Ontario, 2019). Built-up areas direct growth to a general area within a municipality, which is key for mitigating sprawl and concentrating growth in one central area.

### Urban Growth Centres

*A Place to Grow* describes urban growth centres as, “existing or emerging downtown areas shown in schedule 4 and as further identified by the Minister on April 2, 2008”. Schedule 4 of *A Place to Grow* identifies 25 urban growth centres within the Greater Golden Horseshoe, such centres will be planned as focal areas for investment in regional public service facilities and accommodate transit networks and provide inter- and intra-regional transit. Urban growth centres will be planned to accommodate population and employment growth, exemplified by Policy 2.2.3.2 which requires urban growth centres to be planned to achieve a minimum of 400, 200 or 150 (depending on location) residents and jobs combined per hectare by 2031. Delineated built-up areas direct growth at a high level, Urban Growth Centres work at the micro-level by directing jobs and housing within a delineated area of a municipality.

### Transit Corridors and Station Areas

*A Place to Grow* Policy 2.2.4.3 identifies minimum resident and job combined per hectare targets for Major Transit Station Areas (MTSA) on priority transit corridors or subway lines. The following resident and jobs combined per hectare are required: 200 for subways, 160 for light rail transit (LRT) or bus rapid transit and 150 for Go Transit rail network. To ensure the prescribed job and resident densities are achieved, *A Place to Grow* (2.2.4.6) prohibits development that may negatively affect achieving such densities (Ontario, 2019). The concept of providing complete communities is prevalent through Policy 2.2.4.9 which requires MTSAAs to plan for a mix of uses, affordable housing to support transit, encourage collaboration amongst the private and public sector and prohibit land uses and built-forms that will mitigate the achievement of transit supportive densities. MTSAAs are key in the development of complete communities by creating pockets high density jobs and employment that are in walking distance to priority transit corridors.

### Employment

Protecting lands designated as employment is essential to meet the job targets identified in Schedule 3 of *A Place to Grow*. Section 2.2.5 provides in-depth policies to facilitate the promotion and protection of employment lands, which include; making efficient use of employment areas and underutilized employment lands, ensuring available land for a variety of employment, connect high employment areas through transit, align land use planning and economic development goals to attract investment and employment. As upper- and single-tier municipalities are required to



designate and protect for employment lands, *A Place to Grow* provides municipalities with policy tools to ensure employment lands are protected as per section 2.2.5.6 which requires an employment conversion to only be permitted through an MCR (Ontario, 2019). Employment opportunities and housing options along a priority transit line is helpful in mitigating car use and encourage citizens to rely on transit for daily commutes to work.

### Housing

Similar to employment, proper housing policies are vital to meet Schedule 3 population forecasts, *A Place to Grow* Policy 2.2.6.1 requires municipalities to identify a variety of housing options and densities, along with establishing targets for rental housing and affordable ownership (Ontario, 2019). Municipalities are further encouraged by Policy 2.2.6.2 to support the creation of complete communities through; accommodating forecasted growth and minimum intensification targets, consider the existing range and mix of housing options and densities, and plan to diversify the overall housing stock throughout the municipality (Ontario, 2019). For complete communities to function properly, there needs to be a mix of housing to provide families a place to grow, aiding in the achievement of intensification targets through generational growth.

### Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

*A Place to Grow* defines settlement areas as urban areas and rural settlements within municipalities that meet the following criteria:

- a) built up areas where development is concentrated and which have a mix of land uses; and
- b) lands which have been designated in an official plan for development in accordance with the policies of this Plan. Where there are no lands that have been designated for development, the settlement area may be no larger than the area where development is concentrated. (Ontario, 2019).

To accommodate provincial job and employment forecasts, section 2.2.1.2 of *A Place to Grow* states that the majority of growth will be directed to settlement areas which have; a delineated built boundary, existing or planned municipal water and wastewater systems and can achieve complete communities. Upper- and single-tier municipalities are required to delineate settlement areas within their Official Plans (Policy 2.2.8.1) and that an expansion to an existing settlement boundary may only occur through an MCR which meets the policy requirements set out by *A Place to Grow*.

Settlement Area boundary expansion policies are vital to mitigating sprawl by ensuring growth is well planned and contained within existing areas, this also aids in mitigating automobile use. Further research is required to determine how the approval of settlement boundary expansions have changed throughout the various versions of the Growth Plan and their possible impacts on mitigating suburban sprawl.

### Rural Areas

Rural areas are planned to serve the needs of rural residents and businesses through a variety of cultural and economic opportunities. Outside of settlement areas, development on rural lands is permitted, subject to the following uses, “a) the management or use of resources; b) resource-based recreational uses; and c) other rural land uses that are not appropriate in settlement areas”. Policy 2.2.9.6 indicates that new residential lots will be directed towards settlement areas, but may be approved where there is, “site-specific locations with approved zoning or designation in an official plan that permitted this type of development as of June 16, 2006.” However, the intent of Policy 2.2.9.6 is meant to encourage residential intensification towards settlement areas.

The “Where and How to Grow” section of *A Place to Grow 2019* outlines several policy objectives that will develop a built-form grounded in the characteristics of a complete community. Delineated built-up areas can be viewed as the macro-level influencer by directing growth to a general area. Whereas Urban Growth Centres, MTSAs, Employment and Housing targets work at the micro level by indicating context specific policies that shape and facilitate complete communities. Throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe different communities are growing and developing at varying rates, providing policy direction to manage growth in a context specific manner is a key feat of *A Place to Grow 2019*. For example, Urban Growth Centres are planned to be serviced by high-order transit and a mix of uses therefore they can accommodate a higher rate of intensification. Whereas, Rural Areas outside of settlement areas are planned to provide different opportunities to rural residents and local businesses. *A Place to Grow 2019* plays an important balancing function by coordinating intensification that reflects the local municipal contexts of different areas. Although not touched upon in great detail in this paper, another provincial policy implemented in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is Ontario’s *Greenbelt Plan 2017*. The Plan’s goal and objectives are to protect agricultural land, natural areas and water resources

by directing growth away from its defined boundary. It also provides a policy framework on how to manage rural growth and support the agri-food network. (Ontario, 2017). A brief analysis of the Region of Peel is undertaken in the following section to showcase how the Growth Plan objectives and policies are implemented in three municipalities with dramatically different communities aimed at achieving dramatically different results. Caledon, Brampton and Mississauga all have differing built-forms which creates a challenge and opportunity for the Region of Peel to implement different planning policies and approaches that are contextually sensitive while adhering to the policy objectives of the Growth Plan as they relate to the development of complete communities.

## **Chapter 7 – A Place to Grow and the Region of Peel**

Having understood the policy goals of the government through the Growth Plan to mitigate suburban sprawl, this chapter addresses how these policies are incorporated at a regional level through an upper-tier official plan. The Region of Peel has a total population of approximately 1,381,739, the largest portion of population is located in the City of Mississauga (721,599), followed by the City of Brampton (593,638) and the Town of Caledon (66,502) (Region of Peel, 2016). The total land area of the Region is 1,247 km<sup>2</sup>, with Caledon occupying the majority of land area at 688.2 km<sup>2</sup>, Mississauga follows at 292 km<sup>2</sup> and Brampton has 25.6 km<sup>2</sup> less than Mississauga. (Region of Peel, 2016). Statistics Canada released the value of building permits issued in 2016 (value in thousands) throughout the Region of Peel, with the Regional total at \$3,496,173, the City of Brampton led with \$1,964,720, Mississauga followed at \$1,275,236 and the Town of Caledon with the least amount at \$255,217 (Region of Peel, 2016). The difference amongst lower-tier land area (km<sup>2</sup>), population size and value of building permits throughout the Region of Peel is indicative of how the Growth Plan provides different growth objectives based on the varying local context of different communities. Through my review of the Official Plan and Secondary Plans, coupled with first person interviews, it became evident that the Region of Peel Official Plan policies are not enough to encourage complete community development this is due to two reasons. First, the Region of Peel is only the approval authority for Official Plan amendments as they have to confirm to the Region's Official Plan. Peel is not the approval authority for all other development application such as Site Plan applications, but rather a commenting agency. Secondly, the Region was originally set up to provide hard services (wastewater, water, waste etc.) to the local tier, which exacerbates the Region's ability to implement planning requirements that facilitate the development of complete communities.

### **7.1 Overview of the Region of Peel**

In January 1974, through Ontario's *Regional Municipality of Peel Act*, the Regional Municipality of Peel was created (Region of Peel, 2018). Through the *Regional Municipality of Peel Act*, the Region was established as an upper-tier municipality, serving three lower-tier municipalities of the City of Brampton, the City of Mississauga and the Town of Caledon (Regional Municipality of Peel Act, 2005). According to the Region of Peel Official Plan, regional governance was implemented to provide services to residents and businesses throughout Peel, such

as; “construction and maintenance of Regional Roads, waste management, water and sanitary sewers, regional planning” (Region of Peel, 2018). The Region of Peel is required to have an Official Plan as per the Section 16 of the *Planning Act*, it also requires lower-tier Official Plans to conform to upper-tier Official Plans (Planning Act, 1990). The Regional Official Plan provides a policy framework to assist Regional Council in decision making on matters of Regional interest, such as; directing growth, efficiently providing Regional services, protecting the environment and managing resources (Region of Peel, 2018). The province of Ontario has designated all upper-tier municipalities as the approval authority for lower-tier Official Plans (Ontario, 2019), providing the Region of Peel the power to manage and coordinate planning policies amongst its lower-tier partners.

## 7.2 Where and How to Grow: The Regional Official Plan

The Region of Peel is one of the 16 regions within the Greater Golden Horseshoe and subject to the policies of *A Place to Grow* (Ontario, 2019). According to schedule 3 of *A Place to Grow*, following the City of Toronto, the Region of Peel is forecasted to achieve the greatest population and employment growth for 2031, 2035 and 2041 (*figure 4*) amongst municipalities within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Ontario, 2019). The Region of Peel Official Plan outlines Regional growth forecasts (*figure 4*) for 2021 and 2031, which are consistent with schedule 3 of *A Place to Grow*. The Regional and Provincial forecasts indicate where population, households and employment will be distributed amongst lower-tier municipalities in Peel.

<b>Table 3: Population, Household and Employment Forecasts for Peel<sup>1</sup></b>						
<b>Municipality</b>	2021			2031		
	Population <sup>2</sup>	Households	Employment	Population <sup>2</sup>	Households	Employment
Brampton	635,000	184,000	280,000	727,000	214,500	314,000
Caledon	87,000	28,000	40,000	108,000	33,500	46,000
Mississauga	768,000	253,000	500,000	805,000	270,000	510,000
<b>Peel</b>	<b>1,490,000</b>	<b>465,000</b>	<b>820,000</b>	<b>1,640,000</b>	<b>518,000</b>	<b>870,000</b>

Figure 4: Population, Household and Employment Forecasts for Peel (Table 3, Region of Peel Official Plan, 2018)

The forecasts of Table 3 (*figure 4*) indicate that the vast majority of population, household and employment growth will take place in the City of Mississauga, followed by the City of Brampton, whereas the Town of Caledon will experience the least growth. Local municipalities within Peel are directed by the Regional Official Plan to integrate the table 3 forecasts into their respective Official Plans. Regional Official Plan Policy 4.2.2.6 requires the figures in Table 3

(figure 4) to be reviewed and updated at least every five years to align with Provincial targets. Regional growth forecasts serve as a guiding principle for Regional Official Plan policies dealing with growth and development, as outlined by Policy 4.2.2.5, “Use the population and employment forecasts shown in Table 3 for determining land and housing requirements to accommodate future growth.” The Region of Peel implements the forecasts outlined in table 3 through; the Urban Growth Boundary, Urban Growth Centres, Regional Intensification Corridors, Rural Service Centres and Settlement Boundaries, and Residential Estate Communities. In the following section, I will outline how the Region of Peel Official Plan directs growth to these different areas and some of strengths/weaknesses of the different policies.

### Urban System

The Regional Official Plan states that the 2031 Regional Urban Boundary delineates where urban growth will take place throughout Peel. The 2031 Regional Urban Boundary identifies “the Urban System” which are lands within the boundary and “the Rural System” which are lands outside of the boundary (). The Urban System designates several land-uses within its boundary, such as; urban growth centres, regional intensification corridors, natural environment and resources. Policy 5.3.1 of the Regional Official Plan states that Urban Systems should aim to achieve the following; sustainable development, conserve environmental features, establish healthy and complete communities, a compact form and mix of uses and an urban structure that is pedestrian friendly and transit supportive (Region of Peel, 2018). Urban development and redevelopment in Peel Region will be directed to the Urban System. Lower-tier Official Plans, as per Regional Official Plan Policy 5.3.2.6, are required to include policies in their Official Plan that; “a) support the Urban System objectives and policies in this Plan; b) support pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive urban development; c) provide transit-supportive opportunities for redevelopment, intensification and mixed land use;” Schedule D of the Regional Official Plan indicates that the vast majority of the City of Mississauga and the City of Brampton are located within the ‘Urban System’ and are forecasted to achieve high levels of population and employment growth.

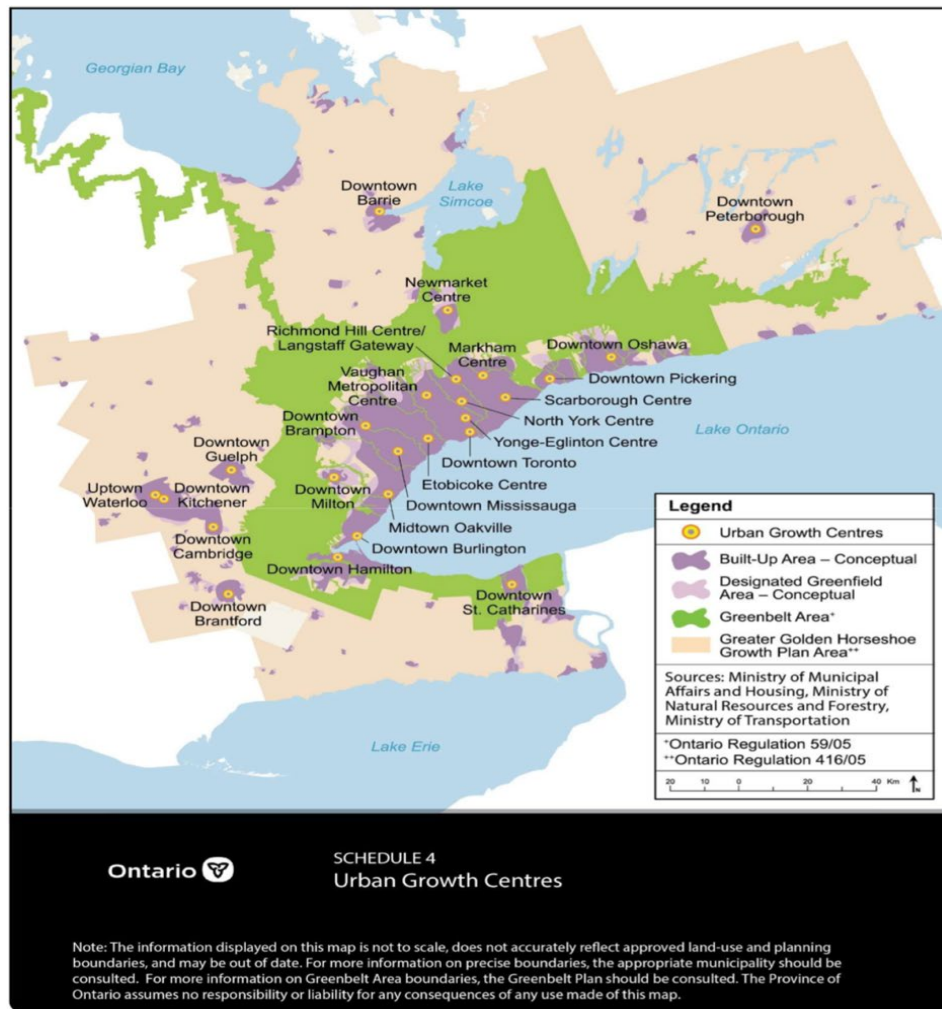


Figure 5: Urban Growth Centres (Schedule 4, *A Place to Grow*, 2019)

### Urban Growth Centres

Schedule 4 (figure 5) from *A Place to Grow* delineates Urban Growth Centres throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe, two of which are in Peel: Downtown Brampton Urban Growth Centre, the Downtown Mississauga Urban Growth Centre. Section 2.2.3 of *A Place to Grow* requires that by 2031, Downtown Brampton and Downtown Mississauga achieve a minimum of 200 jobs and residents combined per hectare (Ontario, 2019). The Regional Official Plan identifies Urban Growth Centres (figure 5) locations for, “intensification that include compact forms of urban development and redevelopment providing a range and mix of housing, employment, recreation, entertainment, civic, cultural and other activities”. Moreover, Regional Official Plan

Policy 5.3.3.2.1 provides direction to its local municipalities regarding the built-form of Urban Growth Centres:

“Direct the Cities of Brampton and Mississauga to designate and delineate the boundaries of urban growth centres, in accordance with the Growth Plan requirements as shown conceptually on Schedule D, to provide opportunities for *compact forms* of urban *development* and *redevelopment* with high density employment uses such as: commercial, office and major institutional - as designated and/or defined in *area municipal official plans*, residential, recreational, cultural and civic activities that offer a wide range of goods and *services* to the residents and workers of *Peel Region* and other residents of the *Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton (GTHA)*” (Region of Peel, 2018)

Urban Growth Centres are to be comprehensively planned for high-densities, mixed-uses, employment and recreation centres and transit connectivity. Therefore, local municipalities in Peel must precisely outline how they will meet such objectives through Official Plan and Secondary Plan policies. Regional Official Plan Policy 5.3.3.2.4 is to “Encourage the area municipalities to prepare policies for the urban growth centres that are identified in this Plan and consistent with the Growth Plan, address the following:” The Regional Official Plan then outlines a variety of general policies, including the following:

- a) the intended role and character of the centre;
- c) the population and employment capacity objectives of the centre;
- e) the achievement of a minimum gross density target of 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare by 2031 or earlier;
- g) the transportation system to and within the centre.

Although the policy direction of 5.3.3.2.4 may appear to be in line with the Growth Plan, attention should be paid to the language of the policy, particularly the phrase “encourage the area municipalities”. ‘Encouraging’ does not have the same impetus as “require” which would provide a stronger back-bone in ensuring local Official Plans concisely carry out the Provincial Plans and Regional objectives. Urban Growth Centres help achieve complete communities by encouraging appropriate densities that encompass a mix of employment and residents, that can be supported by high order transit corridors.

#### Regional Intensification Corridors

*A Place to Grow 2019* identifies a key aspect of complete communities as being transit supportive by offering a range of transit options. The Hurontario Corridor is identified by the



Regional Official Plan as a Regional Intensification Corridor (*figure 6*), providing a linkage amongst Peel's Urban Growth Centres in Brampton and Mississauga. The Regional Intensification Corridor is planned to accommodate growth associated with the Hurontario LRT project, which is identified as a high-order transit corridor in schedule 6 of the City of Mississauga Official Plan (City of Mississauga, 2019). Mississauga is directed by the Regional Official Plan Section 5.3.3.2.7 to delineate the boundaries of the Hurontario Regional Intensification Corridor through its Official Plan and create policies that are consistent with the Peel Official Plan (Region of Peel, 2018).

Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) are defined by *A Place to Grow* as an area within a 500 to 800 metre radius of an existing or planned higher order transit station within a settlement area. Section 2.2.4.3 of *A Place to Grow*, requires MTSAs on priority transit corridors to have a minimum of 160 residents and jobs combined per hectare for MTSAs served by light rail transit. In compliance with section 2.2.4.5 of the *A Place to Grow*, the Region of Peel is currently undertaking a MCR process to delineate the boundaries and densities for MTSAs. In support of achieving provincial density targets along the Intensification Corridor, the Regional Official Plan Policy 5.3.3.2.5 speaks to the role of lower-tier municipalities:

“Require the area municipalities to identify intensification corridors, *major transit station areas* and other major *intensification* opportunities such as infill, redevelopment, brownfield sites, the expansion or conversion of existing buildings and greyfields in their official plans and support increased residential and employment densities within these areas to ensure the viability of transit and a mix of residential, office, institutional and commercial development.” (Region of Peel, 2018)

The regional intensification corridors are catalysts that assist the facilitation of complete communities in Peel, providing live-work opportunities, serviced by higher order transit, high density urban forms and a mix of uses. *A Place to Grow 2019* outlines that intensification is to occur through the development of complete communities. In alignment, the Regional Official Plan Policy 5.3.3.2.6 (c) clearly states the corridor should provide complete community characteristics which include, “a high intensity, compact urban form with an appropriate mix of uses including commercial, office, residential, recreational and major institutional – as designated and/or defined in area municipal official plans;”. The Regional Official Plan provides a robust policy framework

to not only guide growth along the intensification corridor but to ensure that the built-form reflects that of a complete community.

### *The Rural System*

The 2031 Urban Regional Boundary ceases north of Mayfield Road, therefore the Town of Caledon is part of the ‘Rural System’. The Town of Caledon is defined by the Regional Official Plan as, “a community of communities and should be viewed holistically as a planning entity”. Unlike the Cities of Mississauga and Brampton, the Town of Caledon does not have a designated Urban Growth Centre or Regional Intensification Corridor. Rather, the Town’s Rural System consists of low-density land designations like; the protected country side and protected lands of the natural environment, rural service centres, settlement areas and the Palgrave estates.

### *Rural Service Centres and Settlement Areas*

Schedule D (*figure 6*) of the Regional Official Plan identifies three Rural Service Centres in Caledon; Mayfield West, Caledon East and Bolton. Regional Official Plan Policy 5.4.4.2 directs growth to Rural Service centres and the Palgrave Estate Community. These three service centres are a focal point for growth for rural Peel, therefore the Town of Caledon is directed by Regional Official Plan Policy 5.4.3.2.4, to include the following policies in its Official Plan:

- a) the intended role, function and distinct character of each Rural Service Centre;
- b) the population and employment forecasts for the year 2031;
- c) the Regional greenfield density and intensification targets;
- d) the policy requirements of the Greenbelt Plan for lands within Towns/Villages and Hamlets in the Protected Countryside;
- e) the minimization of crime by the use of such approaches as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles; and
- f) other relevant issues. (Region of Peel, 2018)

As per section 5.4.3.2.1 of the Regional Official Plan, Rural Service Centres are to “provide a range and mix of residential, employment, commercial, recreational and institutional land uses and community services to those living and working in the Rural System” (Region of Peel, 2018). Despite the Region of Peel Official Plan stating that service centres will have a range and mix of uses, it does not necessarily mean that these areas will function as complete communities as defined in this paper. Rural Service Centres are planned to accommodate lower population and employment densities than Urban Growth Centres, therefore they take on a different context than

those of urban growth centres. During first person interviews interviewees were asked, “What do you perceive to be the missing link that is exacerbating the development of complete communities in Caledon?”. Both interviewees outlined the fact that the Town of Caledon does not have a public transit system, which is a major hinderance to the development of complete communities. One of my interviewees explained that without a proper public transit system, communities inherently become automobile dependent. They continued by outlining that without a transit system to connect the areas of Caledon a positive feedback loop forms, where residents are faced with the challenge of planning for complete communities that are missing an integral piece of the complete community formula (i.e. transit and walkability). From a policy planning standpoint this also has impacts, as the Regional Official Plan is unable to implement policy requirements in their Official Plan that integrate public transit for the Town of Caledon. It further illustrates how the notion of complete communities varies and is subject to implementation challenges dependent on the existing built form (Region of Peel Interviewee, February 20, 2020).

#### *Estate Residential Communities*

5.4.4.2 of the Region of Peel Official Plan directs growth to the Rural Service Centres and the Palgrave Estate Residential Community (Region of Peel, 2018). The Palgrave Estates are characterized as having large lot sizes with detached residences on private septic systems (Region of Peel, 2018). The Regional Official Plan identifies that estate communities represent a small portion of Peels housing stock, yet play a key role in providing an alternative housing form and lifestyle to Regional residents (Region of Peel, 2018). Schedule D (*figure 6*) of the Region of Peel Official Plan delineates the boundary of the Palgrave Estate Community, Regional Official Plan policy 5.4.4.2.2 states that a change to the Palgrave boundary will require a Regional Official Plan Amendment. The Town of Caledon is directed by the Region of Peel to only consider new estate developments within the Palgrave community or any other parcel committed for estate residential development, dependent that the proposed development conforms to Regional Official Plan policies found in section 5.4.4.2.3 (Region of Peel, 2018). The housing stock of the Palgrave Estate Community is reminiscent of community development post World War 2, single detached homes on large lots, where the automobile is a necessity for daily movement, a planning land form which is distinctly different from those of complete communities identified earlier.

### Land Use in Peel

The Region of Peel Official Plan has a unique planning function as it plans for lands within the Urban System and Rural Areas. The Region is responsible for planning for different types of land-uses based on different community contexts. For example, the land use context along the Hurontario Corridor in Mississauga takes on a much different use than the Palgrave Estate Community in Caledon. It must be acknowledged that the Region cannot simply apply a blanket of ‘complete-community’ policies amongst different areas, rather the Regional Official Plan provides policy direction that acknowledges the unique context of different areas. However, there are areas where the Regional Official Plan can be improved, such as the language found in the Urban Growth Centre chapter.

When describing the implementation of Growth Plan and Regional policies at the local level, the Regional Official Plan often uses the word “encourage”, rather than using a phrase with more enforceability like, “shall” or “require”. This is not an outlier in the Official Plan, there are other examples where weak phraseology diminishes the significance of certain policies, an area to be considered upon the next Official Plan review. One strength of the Official plan is the policies found for the Intensification Corridor, these policies outline the distinct role that the corridor plays in linking the two-urban Growth Centres and their corresponding built form (i.e. high density, compact, pedestrian friendly, mix of uses and transit supportive) and require municipalities to plan for the same. Planning for Rural Service Centres and the Palgrave Estate Community in Caledon present a distinct challenge for the Regional Official Plan. The existing built form of these areas are definitely not complete community inspired, they are comprised of; single-detached homes, single use developments and a reliance on automobile use. In addition, my interviewee outlined that there is no public transit system in Caledon which presents challenges with respect to creating land use policies that are public transit oriented.

While conducting first-person research, the question was posed to interviewees, “What can the Region of Peel do to ensure development in Peel implement built form characteristics of complete communities?”. One of the most insightful responses received was provided by a Planner that works at the Region of Peel, who outlined that the Region is not the approval authority for Site Plan or other development applications circulated to the Region rather, they are merely a commenting agency. My interviewee outlined that this has two distinct impacts on development within the Region. First, as outlined by the Municipal Act, 2001 Section 11, the Region is set up

to provide services along a vast area of land (i.e. water, wastewater, Regional roads and waste). Therefore, when Regional planning staff review Site Plan and other development applications they are not reviewing the built form characteristics of an application that responsibility is left to the local municipalities. Providing comments and conditions as they relate to the built form is the most pragmatic way to enforce a built form that implements characteristics of complete communities (i.e. block sizes, walkability, transit connectivity, mix of uses.) which is something the Region is unable to do (Region of Peel Interviewee, February 20, 2020). Secondly, the policies found within the Regional Official Plan are not meant to provide direct instruction on how the built form and design of local communities will take place, rather that is left to the municipalities through Official Plans, Secondary Plans and Zoning by-laws. The Regional Official Plan was designed to provide high level guidance by outlining the applicable Growth plan policies each community abide to (Region of Peel Interviewee, February 20, 2020). In the following section, I will outline how each municipality provides more concise and pragmatic land use policies to guide growth that implement objectives of complete communities.

## **Chapter 8 – Implementing A Place to Grow at the Local Level**

As outlined above, the Region of Peel Official Plan has a unique position in the development process which has hindered its ability to directly plan for complete communities at the local level. The subsequent section examines how the Official Plans for the City of Mississauga, City of Brampton and Town of Caledon guide growth based on the policies and objectives of *A Place to Grow 2019* and the Region of Peel Official Plan.

### **8.1 Implementing A Place to Grow in the City of Mississauga**

The following section analyzes how the City of Mississauga Official Plan implements a range of land use policies based on the direction provided by the Growth Plan and the Region of Peel Official Plan. The City of Mississauga is home to the Hurontario Intensification Corridors and an Urban Growth Centre, which allows for intensification opportunities, this is how the City of Mississauga is planning these areas:

#### *Intensification Corridors*

Corridors connect different parts of the city and communities, they are comprised of a road right-of-way with lands abutting the road on either side, these areas will accommodate multi-modal transportation and become attractive public places (City of Mississauga, 2019). Policy 5.4.11 of the Mississauga Official Plan delineates Hurontario Street and Dundas Street as Intensification Corridors, the Hurontario Intensification Corridor runs along Hurontario Street, beginning at Port Credit in the south and ceasing at the City's northern limits (City of Mississauga, 2019). There are a number of Hurontario Light Rail Transit stations within the Hurontario Intensification Corridor, these LRT stations form MTSA's (policy 5.4.15) which are subject to the density targets set out by *A Place to Grow* (City of Mississauga, 2019). To encourage development along the Hurontario Corridor that achieves Provincial density targets, the Mississauga Official Plan 5.4.13 states, "Low density residential development will be discouraged from locating within Intensification Corridors." (City of Mississauga, 2019). This ensures that different areas along the *Hurontario Intensification Corridor* are developed to achieve population and employment densities as outlined by *A Place to Grow 2019*.

### Downtown Mississauga

A *Place to Grow* Schedule 4, identifies downtown Mississauga as an Urban Growth Centre, section 5.3.1.3 of the Mississauga Official Plan identifies Downtown Mississauga as an

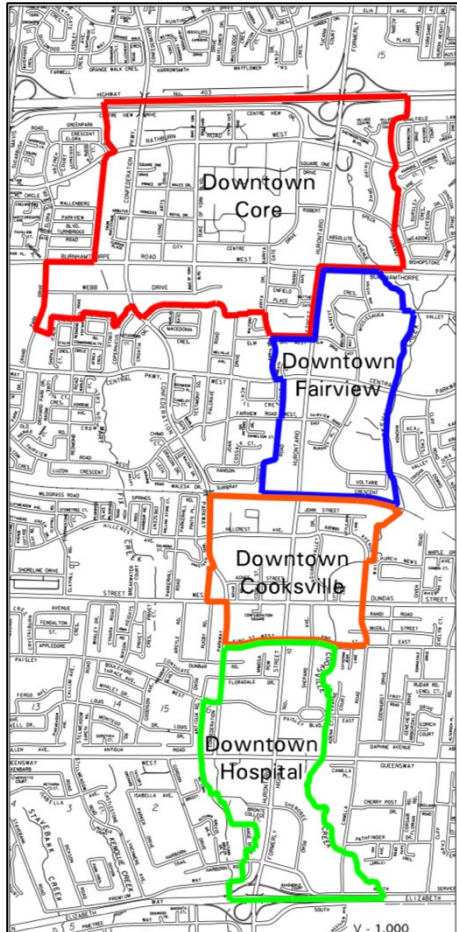


Figure 7: Downtown Mississauga Character Areas (City of Mississauga Official Plan, 2019)

intensification area, and policy 5.3.1.4 states, “The Downtown will achieve a minimum gross density of 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare by 2031. The City will strive to achieve a gross density of between 300 to 400 residents and jobs combined per hectare in the Downtown.” (Ontario, 2019). Downtown Mississauga will be an area where new population and employment growth will be located, connected to regional and city destinations through a transit corridor and regional high order transit (City of Mississauga, 2019). Public transportation in Downtown Mississauga will be serviced by the Hurontario LRT (policy 5.3.1.12) providing connections to other areas of the City and Region (Region of Peel, 2018). To mitigate the use of private vehicles, a common policy objective of the downtown is to be planned as a pedestrian friendly environment that is connected through active modes of transportation.

### Major Nodes

There are three Major Nodes in Mississauga; Central Erin Mills, Lakeview Waterfront and Uptown (City of Mississauga, 2019). The general intent of Major Nodes is to provide a mix of uses that are served by high order transit. For example, the ‘Uptown Node’ is located directly on the Hurontario Street Corridor and will be serviced by the Hurontario LRT (City of Mississauga, 2019). In line with *A Place to Grow*, the City of Mississauga Official Plan identifies Major Nodes as intensification areas (policy 5.3.2.3) that will achieve a gross density of 200 and 300, residents and jobs combined per hectare (City of Mississauga, 2019,). Moreover, policy 5.3.2.6 indicates Major Nodes are planned for an average population to employment ratio between 2:1 or 1:2. The

City of Mississauga further implements complete community objectives through policy 5.3.2.9 of the Official Plan that requires a mix of; commercial, recreational, educational, cultural and entertainment uses within Community Nodes (City of Mississauga, 2019). This policy is consistent with *A Place to Grow* which seeks to achieve complete communities to support intensification through access to transit, protected employment zones and a variety of housing options (Ontario, 2019).

### Community Nodes

The Port Credit Community Node is the only Community Node located within the Hurontario Intensification Corridor. Traditionally Community Nodes exhibit built-form characteristics which are common amongst post-war North-American residential neighbourhoods, “characterized by large blocks, surface parking, and single storey buildings with an internal focus.” (City of Mississauga, 2019). The City of Mississauga Official Plan policy 5.3.3.4 encourages the redevelopment of Community Nodes to align with the goals of the Regional Official plan and *A Place to Grow 2019*, such as having a mix of uses and a density between 100 to 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare. In addition, the Mississauga Official Plan requires Community Nodes to be served by frequent higher order transit and that new development will support active transportation (City of Mississauga, 2019).

### Corporate Centres

There are four Corporate Centres in Mississauga; Airport Corporate, Gateway Corporate, Meadowvale Business Park and Sheridan Park which are to be developed to facilitate major office developments and provide high density employment opportunities (City of Mississauga, 2019). As required by Region of Peel Official Plan policy 5.6.2.6 and *A Place to Grow* policy 2.2.5.6, employment lands in Mississauga are by Official Plan policy 5.3.4.6 which states, “Conversion of lands within Corporate Centres to non-employment uses will only be permitted through a municipal comprehensive review.” (City of Mississauga, 2019). To efficiently move people to and from Corporate Centers, Mississauga Official Plan policy 5.3.4.8 indicates that these areas will be developed to support higher order transit stations while providing an attractive public realm with access to community infrastructure and transportation for employees (City of Mississauga, 2019).



While conducting my first person research, I posed the question “Which Municipality in Peel is most likely to develop a complete community?” It was unanimous amongst my interviewees, who are Planners at the Region of Peel, that it will be the Hurontario Corridor which is undergoing a high volume of development with a range of densities and uses. One of my respondents further outlined that the City of Mississauga Official Plan does an excellent job of implementing pragmatic policies that assist in achieving a range of complete community objectives throughout the City (Region of Peel Interviewee, February 20, 2020). It will be an interesting research opportunity in the following years to assess if the policies of the Mississauga Official Plan, specifically those pertaining to the intensification corridor, to determine if they achieved the objectives set out.

## **8.2 Implementing A Place to Grow in the City of Brampton**

The City of Brampton is within the Urban System and has a designated Urban Growth Centre which is planned for through two different Secondary Plans for the Downtown Brampton Area. The following section reviews these plans and their approach to managing growth in Brampton and some of the challenges the City faces when planning for intensification.

### Central Area

The ‘Central Area’ in the City of Brampton is located in the historic downtown core, stretching along the Queen Street Corridor, clearly delineated in Brampton Official Plan schedule 1 ‘City Concept’ (*Figure 9*) (City of Brampton, 2015). It is planned to be a mixed-use community serving a number of established communities by providing a range of civic, institutional, commercial, retail and employment activities. The two primary objectives of the Central Area according to the City of Brampton Official Plan, are:

- a) Continue to promote the Central Area and Urban Growth Centre as a major preferred location for investment in institutional and region- wide public services; and,
- b) Continue to promote the Central Area and Urban Growth Centre as a prime location for business, shopping, living, dining, entertainment, tourism and cultural activities in the City of Brampton. (City of Brampton, 2015).

The Central Area is designated as an Urban Growth Centre by *A Place to Grow* Schedule 4, requiring a minimum gross density of 200 jobs and population combined per hectare by 2031 (City

of Brampton, 2015). Policy 4.1 of the City of Brampton Official Plan outlines the different types of uses that free standing and mixed-use developments will provide to the central area:

- (i) A full range of office, retail and service activities;
- (ii) A variety of residential uses;
- (iii) Entertainment and cultural uses such as movie theatres, museums,
- (iv) Art galleries, live theatre and tourism, yet recognizing commercial trends for such uses in other parts of the City;
- (v) Governmental, institutional and community facilities and uses including Places of Worship subject to Section 4.9.8 of this Plan;
- (vi) A high-density employment centre that will attract provincially, nationally or internationally significant employment uses; and,
- (vii) Major transit infrastructure. (City of Brampton, 2015).

Facilitating office developments throughout the Central Area is necessary to achieve employment density forecasts by 2031, the City of Brampton Official Plan section 4.15 indicates that planning staff will encourage proposed office developments in the Central Area to facilitate pedestrian networks and maximize existing and planned transit facilities (City of Brampton, 2015). The Central Area policies found in Brampton Official Plan can be viewed as a balancing-act of old vs new. On one hand, the Central Area policies must be progressive by facilitating new development that is mixed-use and encourages aspects of complete communities. In juxtaposition, Central Area policies must also be context sensitive to preserve the rich-history of Downtown Brampton. To

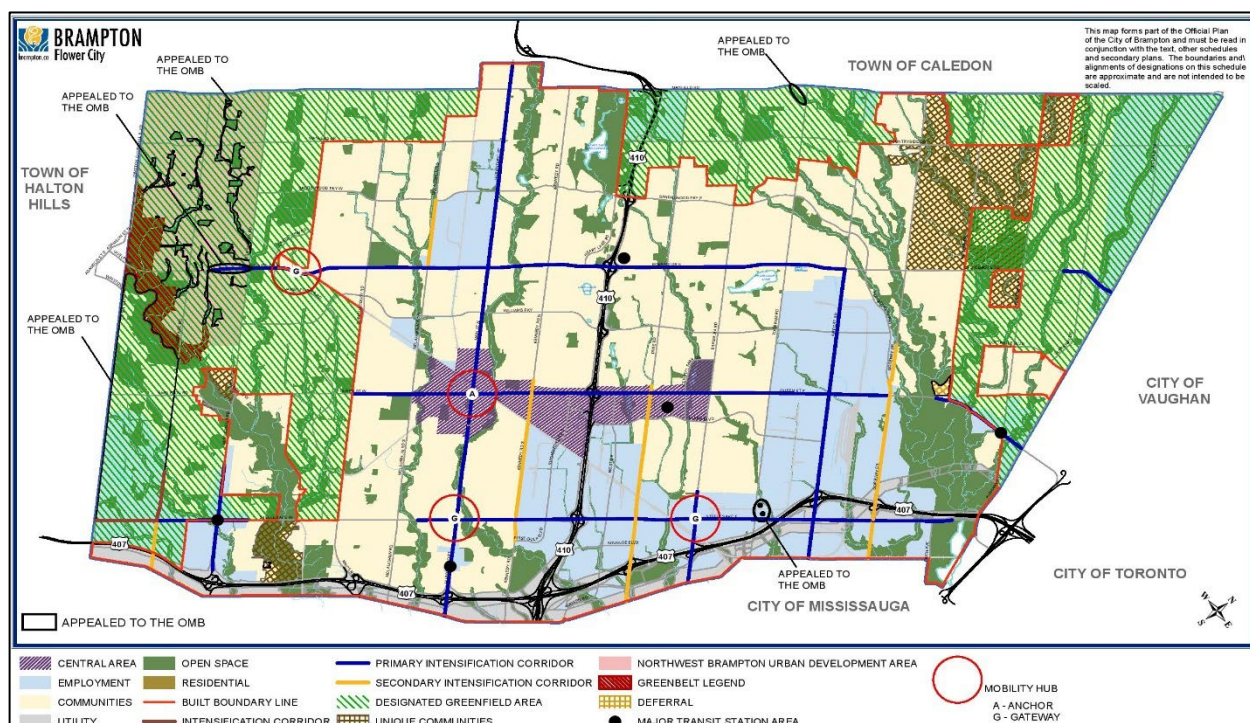


Figure 9: City Concept (Schedule 1, City of Brampton Official Plan, 2015)

accommodate planning policies that are both progressive and conservative the Central Area is subject to two secondary plans: Downtown Brampton (SPA7) and the Queen Street Corridor (SPA36).

#### Secondary Plan Area 7 - Downtown Brampton

The purpose of Secondary Plan Area 7 (SPA7) *Downtown Brampton* is to provide a policy framework for the western portion of the Brampton Central area, an area that features one of three Primary Office Nodes in the City. The area designed ‘Central Area Mixed Use’ is intended to accommodate mixed-use developments as per Official Plan policy 5.1.2., schedule SP7(a) designates and delineates the Central Area Mixed Use (City of Brampton, 2015). SPA7 denotes the greatest FSI densities towards the area designated ‘Office Node’ located at Queen Street and Main Street with FSI densities gradually dispersing away from the Office Node. High-density development within the Central Area Mixed Use promotes the intensification and improvement of the area, encouraging comprehensive development that benefits Brampton residents (City of Brampton, 2015).

Special Policy Area 3 as delineated by schedule SPA7 is the location of the Urban Growth Centre as designated by *A Place to Grow*. However, Special Policy Area 3 has been identified by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to be subject to flooding in a major storm or regulatory flood event, limiting Special Policy Area 3 ability to contribute to the combined jobs and population targets for the Urban Growth Centre. The policies of Special Policy Area 3 attempt to mitigate human risk to the flood zone while still attempting to achieve growth targets. A few examples from policy 5.6.3.2 of SPA7 Downtown Brampton, requires the erection of new buildings to meet flood proofing requirements like; (ii) achieving the maximum feasible level of floodproofing possible, (iii) minimum floodproofing levels shall be the 1:350-year storm event and (v) no residential living spaces shall be permitted below the Regulator Flood level (City of Brampton, 2019). Any future municipally-initiated amendments to the policies in Special Policy Area 3 require provincial approval due to the flood area. The City of Brampton encourages the Provincial and Federal Government along with the TRCA to identify an alternative solution to mitigate the flood-susceptible land from downtown Brampton to better achieve growth forecasts within the Urban Growth Centre (City of Brampton, 2019).

### Secondary Plan Area 36 – Queen Street Corridor

Secondary Plan Area 36 (SPA36) Queen Street Corridor provides a policy framework to achieve efficient and orderly development for the eastern portion of the Brampton Central area. Similar to SPA7, a vast amount of the overall secondary plan area in SPA36 are designated ‘Central Area Mixed Use’. According to SPA36 Queen Street Corridor this area is intended to facilitate mixed-use development featuring a, “combination of commercial, retail, office, residential, hotel, open space, recreational, institutional, a full range of entertainment and cultural uses including, but not limited to, movie theatres, art galleries, live theatre and museums” (City of Brampton, 2019). The Queen Street Secondary Plan implements a variety of policies geared towards high-density office use throughout the area. Office densities in this node are permitted to be greater than any other Office node in Brampton boasting the area to become the premier Office space destination in the City (City of Brampton, 2019). The Central Area Mixed-Use Area policies seek to create a complete live-work community by encouraging residential development with street level retail that will support the Primary Office Node.

### Intensification Corridors

The City of Brampton Official Plan identifies the purpose of intensification corridors as, “providing opportunities for intensive, transit-supportive land uses along roads that link districts/communities with key destinations” (City of Brampton, 2015). One example is the Brampton bus Rapid Transit that links Bovaird Drive, Queen Street, Steeles Avenue and Hurontario Street. Intensification Corridors will be home to significant amounts of residential and employment densities, supporting high order transit (City of Brampton, 2015). Since Intensification Corridors are primarily located along arterial roads, public transit will play a major role in connecting employees and residents to mobility hubs, MTSA’s and other Urban Growth Centres throughout the Region. The City of Brampton Official Plan actively discourages low-density uses along Intensification Corridors, such as; highway commercial, auto repair and warehousing. Rather, Official Plan policy 3.2.6.4 states that developments which exceed the maximum height or density permitted in secondary plans and zoning by-laws to be permitted within Intensification Corridors, which is a phenomenal policy to help encourage intensification along the corridor.

Based on my review of the Official Plan and Secondary Plans, I think that intensification in Downtown Brampton may be impeded because a portion of the area is located within Special Policy Area 3, designated by the TRCA as susceptible to flooding. One of my interview respondents also supported my assumption. My interviewee indicated that it's reasonable to assume that a floodplain designation may deter development within this area of Downtown Brampton (Region of Peel Interviewee, February 20, 2020). My interviewee added that some of the policy requirements outlined in the Brampton Official Plan pertaining to flood mitigation within Special Policy Area 3 may be too costly or complicated for developers to implement therefore mitigating future development from taking place in the area (Region of Peel Interviewee, February 20, 2020). In addition, while reviewing the City of Brampton Official Plan I found it confusing at times. For example, the Central Area receives policy direction from two different secondary plans that are charged with preserving the history of Downtown Brampton while fostering development that achieves the policies of the Urban Growth Centre. In the future, the Brampton Official Plan should clarify the objectives and policies for Downtown Brampton and provide a more streamlined policy direction to better plan for the area.

### **8.3 Implementing A Place to Grow in the Town of Caledon**

Unlike the Cities of Mississauga and Brampton which are both in the Urban System, the Town of Caledon is located within the Rural System. The Town of Caledon does not have an Urban Growth Centre, rather development is directed to Settlement Boundaries and Rural Service Centres which presents a unique challenge when it comes to managing and directing Growth.

#### *Growth Management*

Section 2.2.2.1 (a) of *A Place to Grow* titled, *Delineated Built-Up Areas* requires a minimum of 50% of all residential development in the Region of Peel to take place in built-up areas, by the time the next MCR is approved and in effect (Ontario, 2019). Schedule 1 of the Town of Caledon Official Plan delineates the Growth Plan Policy Areas in Caledon, built-up areas are located in; Caledon Village, Caledon East, Bolton and Mayfield West (*figure 10*) (Town of Caledon, 2018). *A Place to Grow* policy 2.2.7.2 prescribes a minimum density target for Designated Greenfield Areas in the Region of Peel of not less than 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare (Ontario, 2019).

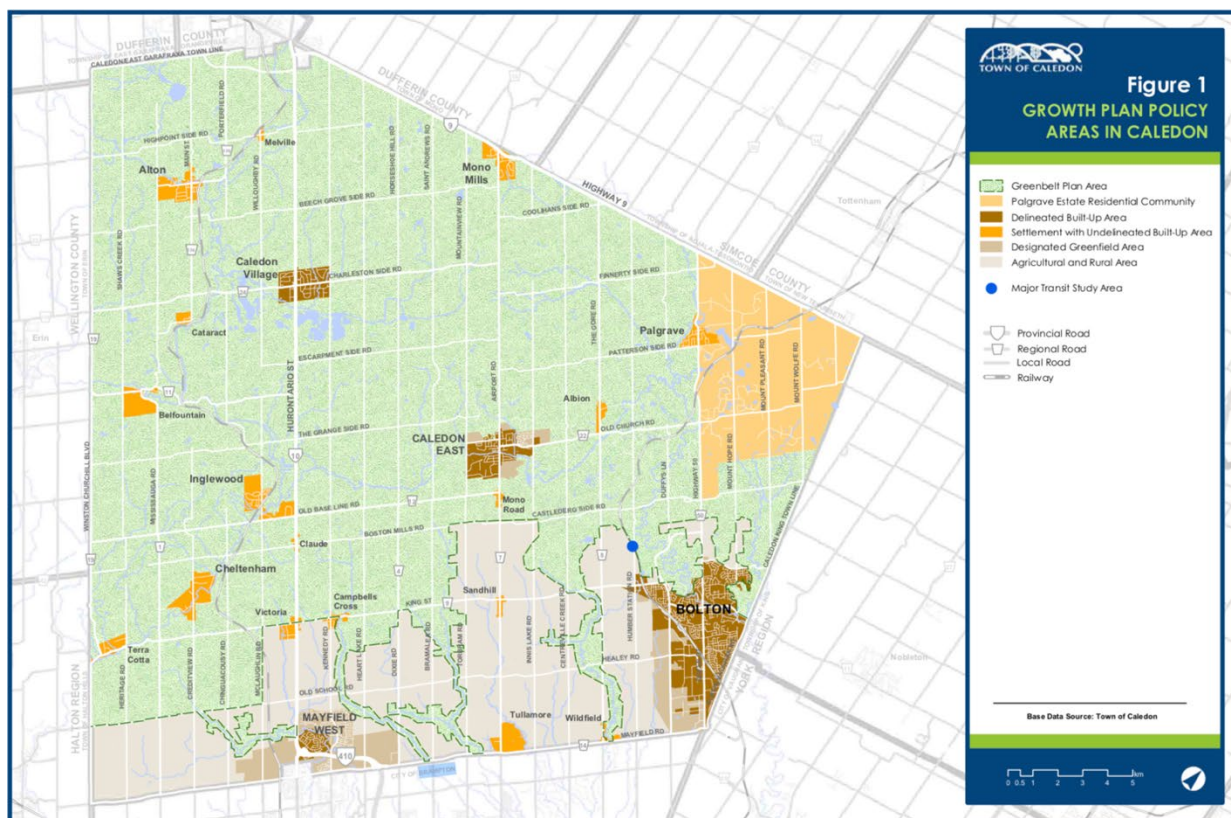


Figure 10 - Growth Plan Policy Areas in Caledon (Figure 1, Town of Caledon Official Plan, 2018).

The Town's Official Plan recognizes that employment uses designated on Greenfield Areas will not achieve the minimum target identified by *A Place to Grow*. To compensate, the majority of intensification will take place in the Rural Service Centres (figure 11).

Settlement Category or Land Use Area	2021 Population	2031 Population
Rural Service Centres	54,825	75,054
Villages	7,428	7,428
Hamlets	1,343	1,343
Industrial/Commercial Centres	175	175
Palgrave Estate Residential Community	4,865	5,371
Rural Lands and Prime Agricultural Area and General Agricultural Area	18,365	18,629
<b>Total</b>	<b>87,001</b>	<b>108,000</b>

Figure 11 - Population Allocation in Caledon (Town of Caledon Official Plan, 2018)

The Town Official Plan outlines the hierarchy of where settlement will occur, in descending order: Rural Service Centres, Villages, Hamlets and Industrial/Commercial Centres (Town of Caledon, 2018). One of the central objectives for establishing a hierarchy as per Official Plan policy, 5.10.2 (f) is, “To encourage the concentration of industrial and commercial



development with employment opportunities within settlements, with adequate provision of housing opportunities for the labour force.” (Town of Caledon, 2018). Each of the settlement areas within the hierarchy will create a unique, context-specific built form, prescribed by the Town of Caledon Official Plan as:

- a) “Rural Service Centres - compact, well-integrated, rural towns that provide the widest range of goods and services to residents within the centres, and residents in a larger geographic area of the Town;
- b) Villages - residential communities that are generally focused on an historic main street or crossroads. They are smaller than Rural Service Centres, and provide a limited range of services to the surrounding community;
- c) Hamlets - small residential communities that are generally limited in size to a cluster of houses. They are smaller than Villages, and provide very limited services, if any; and,
- d) Industrial/Commercial Centres - small, mixed-use settlements that provide a supportive industrial/commercial function to the Rural Service Centres.”

The Town of Caledon Official Plan designates three Rural Service Centres; Mayfield West, Caledon and Bolton, which is the primary area for residential and employment intensification, supported by a range of goods and services (Town of Caledon, 2018). *Figure 12* indicates the 2021 and 2031 population allocations for the Three Rural Service centres, the following will outline how the Town of Caledon will plan for growth in these centres.

<b>Population Allocations</b>	<b>2021 Population</b>	<b>2031 Population</b>
South Albion-Bolton	28,234	39,898
Caledon East	8,412	8,412
Mayfield West <sup>(1)</sup>	18,179	26,744
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,825</b>	<b>75,054</b>

*Figure 12 - Town of Caledon Population Forecasts (Town of Caledon Official Plan, 2018)*

### Mayfield West Rural Service Centre

The Mayfield West Secondary Plan was put in place to assist the Town of Caledon in facilitating the development of a new community for approximately 9,000 people in the Mayfield West Area. Based on the population allocation in *figure 12* this area is expected to receive relatively large quantities of growth until 2031 (Town of Caledon, 2018). The area is to be developed as a mixed-use area, as per policy 7.12.3.1 of the secondary plan, “Develop a compact, mixed-use community that provides residential, employment and commercial opportunities, community facilities and services” (Town of Caledon, 2018), which are in line with *A Place to*

*Grow* 2019 section 2.2.1 (a) as growth is to be directed toward settlement areas that can support complete communities (Ontario, 2019). The Secondary Plan necessitate a mix of housing options for different incomes, age levels and lifestyles, in addition a “pedestrian oriented community” will be present with a built form that has 5-10 minute walking radius’ amongst community features (Town of Caledon, 2018), a great policy objective to mitigate automobile dependence The Mayfield West Secondary Plan section 7.12.3.2 (a) brings forth how the plan will assist in achieving employment targets, identifying the land adjacent to the north of the Highway 410 extension as an area that will be subject to job-creating land uses (Town of Caledon, 2018). Commercial land-use is identified by policy 7.12.3.3 in the Secondary Plan, whereas approximately 9,300 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial area is to be built within the Village Centre (Town of Caledon, 2018). The above policies outline that the secondary area will have a range of employment and residential types which is important in diversifying the land uses throughout the area. However, the secondary plan is missing key objectives to develop a complete community most notable through a lack of transit provisions, which exacerbates automobile reliance and issues of connectivity amongst other areas in the Rural Service Centre.

#### *Caledon East Rural Service Centre*

Based on the population allocations in *figure 12* Caledon East is expected to have minimal growth from 2021 to 2031. One of the objectives of the Caledon East Secondary Plan is (7.7.2 (b)) to, “create a compact community that maintains the character of the surrounding rural landscape, makes effective use of land and services and facilitates pedestrian and vehicular access to community facilities and services;” (Town of Caledon, 2018), indicating that this area will not be heavily intensified rather it will maintain the existing context of the area. The predominant residential density in Caledon East will be low and medium-density, with intensification only permitted near the Commercial Core Area (Town of Caledon, 2018). The area designated as ‘General Commercial’ on schedule D of the Town’s Official Plan, will be the focal point for retail and commercial development in Caledon East. The Caledon East Secondary Plan proposes to develop the General Commercial area into a “traditional main street”, the built form will consist of a mix of residential and commercial developments, with residential uses being confined to the first level of the building (Town of Caledon, 2018). There are four special use areas in Caledon East; Allisson’s Grove, Airport Road, Community Focus Area and Old Church Road. These areas



allow a mix of uses but have significant environmental constraints that require specific policies to accommodate the variety of permitted uses, abutting and adjacent land uses and access requirements (Town of Caledon, 2018). Environmental constraints surrounding Special Study Areas significantly mitigate any opportunity for intensification. Caledon East will experience minimal intensification; housing developments will primarily be single-detached residences, and employment opportunities will continue in the General Commercial Area.

### Bolton Rural Service Centre

The Bolton Settlement is the largest of all Rural Service Centres in the Town of Caledon and according to the allocation forecasts in *figure 12*, its population is expected to grow by more than 10,000 from 2021 to 2031. The Bolton Rural Service Centre contains four secondary plans; Bolton South Hill Secondary Plan, Bolton Core Area Secondary Plan, West Bolton Secondary Plan Area and the North East Bolton Secondary Plan (Town of Caledon, 2018). Each of which play a unique role in managing and directing growth within the Bolton area. The Bolton South Hill Secondary Plan is prescribed as a low-density residential community, one of identified Goals (7.2.2 (d)) of the South Hill Plan Secondary Plan is to, “To plan for an area which will provide for housing opportunities which meet the different needs and incomes of people within the context of low-density community.” (Town of Caledon, 2018). Section 7.25 of the plan identifies five types of residential development: low residential, mixed low and medium residential, medium residential, high residential and special residential (Town of Caledon, 2018). The plan does require a housing mix of 70% single-family and 30% medium and high density in special residential areas, allowing for a mix of different housing types to meet the Town’s official plan requirements (Town of Caledon, 2018). Schedule C of the Town Official Plan designates a commercial area in South Hill, however the lack of policies pertaining to employment uses in the Secondary Plan is concerning with respect to achieving employment targets.

The three service centres encourage development that is context specific throughout the different areas of Caledon. Some Secondary Plan areas are geared towards preserving the existing character with minimal intensification, other areas implement land use policies that encourage higher densities. However, the key issue that exacerbates low-density land use planning throughout Caledon is a lack of public transit. Tayler Parnaby of the Caledon Enterprise states that due to a lack of transit options for Caledon most residents are reliant on automobile trips to GO transit

carpool lots to connect to neighbouring municipalities via public transit (Parnaby, 2019) In the future, the Town should give more consideration to developing a public transit system which could be service developments throughout the Town and better connect Town residents to the remainder of the Region.

## Chapter 9 – Integrating Complete Communities into Development Planning at the Region of Peel

As detailed in the previous two chapters, the Region of Peel’s primary influence on creating complete communities lies in its Official Plan. These policies and objectives are further detailed and implemented through local Official Plans, Secondary Plans and Zoning By-Laws in the Cities of Brampton, Mississauga and Town of Caledon. When it comes to addressing a proposed development, Peel’s focus lies in ensuring the development has the appropriate hard infrastructure to support the proposed land use. The Region of Peel *Healthy by Design: Healthy Development Assessment* (HDA) tool provides Peel with a voice in respect to built form and urban design components when reviewing a development application. Due to the Region of Peel not having approval authority for Site Plan or other development applications, the Region has little ability to place requirements or conditions on planning applications, the HDA provides the Region an opportunity to become more involved in the planning process for developments.

Coincidentally, a complete community is defined by the Region of Peel HDA, as, “compact, pedestrian-friendly, and transit-supportive; contains a mix of uses that support daily living; and, enables physical activity through active transportation.” (Region of Peel, 2016). This definition aligns with *A Place to Grow* concept of how complete communities can support healthy lifestyles by, “encouraging the use of active transportation and providing high quality public open space, adequate parkland, opportunities for recreation, and access to local and healthy food.” (Ontario, 2019). The Region of Peel Official Plan outlines the Region’s commitment to planning healthy communities, the objective of section 7.4 seeks to facilitate a built environment that encourages physical activity and optimize the health promoting potential communities (Region of Peel, 2018). To accomplish Official Plan Objective 7.4, the Region of Peel implemented the Healthy Development Assessment (HDA). The HDA is an evaluative mechanism that scores development applications on their ability to achieve design standards that build healthy and complete communities. The Region of Peel HDA evaluates development applications based on six core elements of healthy community design; “Density, Service Proximity, Land Use Mix, Street Connectivity, Streetscape Characteristics and Efficient Parking” (Region of Peel, 2016). The Region of Peel currently has two versions of the HDA, one for large-scale planning (i.e. secondary plans, plans of subdivision and block plans) and another for small-scale planning (i.e. small plans of subdivision, site plans, official plan and zoning by-law amendments) (Region of Peel, 2016).

Applicants whom submit a development application at the lower-tier municipality are required to complete an HDA application. The Region of Peel outlines the HDA scoring ranges as: Gold (80-100%), Silver (70-79%), Bronze (60-69%) and Pass (50-59%) (Region of Peel, 2016). The importance of the six healthy community criteria are outlined below.

### Density

The HDA defines density as, “number of people, dwelling units, and/or jobs that will be accommodated in a specific area” (Region of Peel, 2016). High density development like town-houses and apartment buildings are often characterized with; reduced lot sizes and increased building coverage, reduced parking supply and a compact street network (Region of Peel, 2016). Communities with the above characteristics are argued to be more efficient by providing a mix-of-uses, employment, residences and transit in close proximity, thus providing opportunities for active transit and more efficient use of resources (Region of Peel, 2016). The density targets outlined in the HDA are based on targets outlined in *A Place to Grow* for Greenfields and Urban Growth Centres.

### Service Proximity

The HDA describes service proximity as, “the distance between where people live and where they can access three types of services: public transit, neighbourhood community and retail services, and employment.” (Region of Peel, 2016). The objective of evaluating the service proximity to a development aids in incentivizing residents to access the three types of services by walking or active transit. Proximity to the three services is judged on the percentage of population within a specified distance of public transit, neighbourhood and retail services and employment (Region of Peel, 2016).

### Land Use Mix

Facilitating a community that has a mix of uses requires different housing types, services and employment. Communities with segregated land-uses mitigate the ability and willingness of residents to partake in active transportation. In juxtaposition, a mixed-use neighbourhood will feature a more compact urban form that supports active and public transportation (Region of Peel, 2016). The HDA evaluates mixed-use communities on their ability to complement density and service-proximity by promoting, “a broad mix of land uses that are conveniently sited and

connected by safe and comfortable routes to residential areas that provide a variety of housing options.” (Region of Peel, 2016).

### *Street Connectivity*

The HDA defines street connectivity as, “the directness of travel and the number of route options between any two destinations.” (Region of Peel, 2016). The built-form and urban design of areas with enhanced street connectivity generally do not have large block sizes rather, these areas have permeable roads, small laneways and pedestrian cut-throughs to increase accessibility (Region of Peel, 2016). Poorly connected street patterns affect the directness and travel distance amongst destinations in communities, potentially mitigating the willingness of residents to use active transportation like walking and cycling to reach destinations.

### *Streetscape Characteristics*

Streetscaping characteristics are amenities for pedestrians along the right-of-way, such as; sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, way finding and traffic calming design. The HDA argues that the implementation of such streetscape characteristics will, “promote increased physical activity, community interaction and accessibility, while reducing the incidence of crime and traffic-related pedestrian and cycling injuries and fatalities.” (Region of Peel, 2016). Active transportation is possible without some of these streetscape characteristics however, they provide a level of comfort for commuters by segregating vehicles and public-transit from a commuter’s right-of-way.

### *Efficient Parking*

The HDA highlights the goal of efficient parking as, “to discourage private automobile use and promote active modes of transportation, including walking, cycling and public transit.” (Region of Peel, 2016). In essence, efficient parking standards seek to reduce car parking availability while increasing bicycle parking. Mitigating automobile dependence through efficient parking will also reduce car emissions, having a profound effect on the environment and health of residents.

### *The Healthy Development Assessment: Next Steps*

There are two notable drawbacks of the HDA: infrastructure requirements and a lack of enforceability. With respect to infrastructure requirements, the Town of Caledon does not have a public transit system which has a major impact on development potential in the Town. Primarily,

high-density developments will still be dependent on automobile use rather than public transit, a major impediment on achieving a ‘healthy’ development. The purpose of the Healthy Development assessment is defined by the Region of Peel as, “Developers use the tool to evaluate and pre-emptively mitigate any potential health impacts associated with their development proposal.” (Region of Peel, 2016). The Region reviews and comments on development applications pertaining to areas of Regional interest however, they are not the approval authority for development applications at the lower-tier level. The Region of Peel states that the HDA is an informative component of the development review process (Region of Peel, 2016), the results of an HDA cannot be used as a condition of approval or refusal for a given development application. There is no doubt that the HDA is a step forward by encouraging development applications that implement the characteristics of a “healthy community”, which are synonymous with some of the characteristics of complete communities as defined by *A Place to Grow*. As the Region of Peel undertakes its MCR, they should look for opportunities to strengthen the role of the HDA in the development review process. Moreover, there are also infrastructure issues that mitigate the effectiveness of the HDA.

## Chapter 10 – Conclusion

This paper examined the legislative requirements laid out in the *Planning Act* and the minimum legal requirements as provided by the Provincial Policy Statement and how these policies provide direction to municipalities throughout Ontario. Through the legislative review attention was paid to provincial plans, specifically *A Place to Grow 2019* which continues the legacy of Ontario's first regional growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe with some modifications, as is expected. *A Place to Grow 2019* aims to manage growth in a manner that is socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. This is achieved by determining where and how to grow which includes increasing the housing supply, identifying urban growth centres, improving transportation, protecting and expanding the labour market, supporting the growth of infrastructure, managing natural resources, protecting natural sensitive lands, protecting agricultural lands, and expanding and maximizing economic opportunities to encourage growth upwards rather than outwards. Through Ontario's growth plan, planning concepts of complete communities became an integral part of the government's policy goals operationalized in legislation and the planning regime in Ontario. Further detailed is how the Region of Peel implemented the policies found in *A Place to Grow 2019* to direct growth amongst its lower tier municipalities.

Ontario's land use planning framework was reviewed, outlining the top-down framework and how it informs land use policies and decisions throughout local municipalities. The *Planning Act* provides the rules and regulations for land use planning processes while the PPS determines the minimum requirements for local planning authorities. Although the PPS attempted to provide linkages among policy areas, it was not able to provide the adequate guidance in planning policies through set goals and targets. The *Planning Act* outlines 'Provincial Plans', like *A Place to Grow 2019*, which provides policy direction to manage growth throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe that includes policy objectives related to complete communities, going beyond the PPS policies. The *Planning Act* also requires municipal land use planning decision to conform to the policies within *A Place to Grow 2019*. To accomplish this both regional and municipal governments implement provincial plan policies through their respective Official Plans. For example, the Region of Peel Official Plan provides high-level direction to its lower tier municipalities such as, requiring lower-tier official plans to define and plan for growth within Urban Growth Centres by meeting minimum intensification targets as provided by the Growth Plan. Whether this type of

planning continues is indeed subject to government laws and policies as well as the influence of external influences such as developers. Through my review of the Region of Peel Official Plan I discovered that the Region did not have a robust policy framework when it came to implementing Growth Plan objectives and policies at the local level. In a quest to understand some of the challenges the Region of Peel faces with respect to implementing Growth Plan policies as they relate to complete communities I conducted first person interviews with Region of Peel planning staff coupled with secondary research.

Through first person interviews and secondary research two possible explanations emerged as to how the Region's role in the development process may mitigate the Region's ability to implement land use requirements that encourage built characteristics of complete communities. Firstly, as outlined in the *Municipal Act 2001* upper-tier municipalities have a distinct role which is to provide certain services to their citizens such as waste collection, wastewater and water services. Secondly, one of my interview respondents outlined that the Region of Peel is only the approval authority for local official plan amendment applications. For other development applications such as Site Plans or Subdivisions for example, the conditions and requirements provided by the Region are typically limited to servicing requirements. Due to these limitations, development policies related to complete communities are left for local level municipalities to implement ensuring development is consistent with the high-level goals of the Regional Official Plan and *A Place to Grow 2019*. Recognizing its limited role in the development process with respect to implementing policies as they relate to complete communities, the Region of Peel recently implemented the *Healthy Development Assessment (HDA)*. The HDA's evaluative criteria provides applicants with design characteristics that are compact, pedestrian-friendly, active and transit supportive. Although the intention of the HDA is rather revolutionary relative to other Peel Official Plan policies as they relate to development applications, one large draw back of the assessment is that it cannot be used as a condition of Site Plan approval leaving it with minimum enforceability. Should the Region of Peel reassess its role in the development process it would provide an opportunity to implement more enforceable built form conditions as they relate to complete communities.



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