



Staff Report

To: Council

From: Shawn Binns, Chief Administrative Officer and
George Vadeboncoeur, Manager, Planning Special Projects

Meeting Date: January 22, 2025

Report No.: DS2025-005

Subject: Options Report Regarding City of Barrie Proposed Boundary
Expansion - Hemson Proposed Phase 3 Analysis and Study

Type: Requires Action

Motion No.:

Recommendation

1. That report DS2025-005 Options Report Regarding City of Barrie Proposed Boundary Expansion - Hemson Proposed Stage 3 Analysis and Study be received and adopted;
2. That Council inform the Office of the Provincial Land Development Facilitator that it is prepared to continue to participate with the Township of Springwater, the City of Barrie and the County of Simcoe as per the parameters outlined in Option 3 in this report.

Background

On November 8, 2023, Mayor Nuttall, of the City of Barrie, made a [presentation](#) to the Township of Oro-Medonte proposing a boundary adjustment to address Barrie's need for additional employment lands.

These lands encompass approximately 772 hectares (1,907.65 acres) of active farmland and environmentally sensitive features.

In February 2024 Council received staff report [DS2024-017 City of Barrie Proposed Boundary Expansion](#) and approved Motion No.C240214-10 responding to the City's request indicating that:

- a. *the Township of Oro-Medonte does not support the City of Barrie's proposed Municipal Boundary Expansion as presented.*
- b. *the Township of Oro-Medonte is prepared to work with the City of Barrie to find an amicable solution to address its employment land needs based on a comprehensive planning process that works for Oro-Medonte, the City of Barrie, the County of Simcoe and the Province."*

In June 2024, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing assigned the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator to work with the City of Barrie, the Townships' of Oro-Medonte and Springwater, and the County of Simcoe, *"to assist the municipalities in developing a mutually acceptable approach to enable growth in the area and achieve local and Provincial priorities such as the creation of housing and opportunities for employment in the boundaries between Barrie/Springwater and Barrie/Oro-Medonte."*

The parties suggested, and it was agreed that as a first step, the municipalities should objectively assess the need for additional employment and/or residential land within and around the City of Barrie, the Township of Oro-Medonte, and the Township of Springwater.

In September 2024, Hemson Consulting (Hemson) was engaged to undertake a *"Joint Lands Needs Analysis and Study"* pertaining to the defined study area to 2051.

The [draft study](#) and staff report [DS2024-154](#) was presented to Council and the public on December 11, 2024. The initial phase (Stage 1 and Stage 2) included a review of existing background studies, Official Plans, the City of Barrie's existing land supply, and a review of the additional land needs of participating municipalities arising from growth forecasted to 2051.

The following is a brief summary of Hemson's findings from the initial study:

- Barrie has sufficient employment lands to meet demand to 2051 with sufficient serviced supply to address medium and long-term needs (p. 21).
- Barrie has a short supply of *"shovel ready"* lands and/or large parcels that are able to accommodate for the expansion of existing businesses, or for new larger businesses. However, *"Barrie is implementing a targeted plan to accelerate the extension of linear infrastructure in key areas within South Barrie to bring to market"* (pp 17-21).
- Acquiring additional employment lands outside of Barrie would not address short-term supply issues (p. 21).
- Oro-Medonte has well-located employment lands that are in line with the Township's Employment Land Strategy (p. 22)

- Barrie has a limited/weak case for a boundary adjustment in Oro-Medonte or Springwater based solely on the need for employment land uses (p. 48).
- Barrie is challenged in meeting the residential density targets as outlined in its' Municipal Comprehensive Review Document and Official Plan. Historical growth pattern suggests that the density of residential development occurring in the City of Barrie is not as it was originally anticipated/planned for (pp. 34-43).
- Barrie's rate of housing growth will need to increase to meet the City's Housing Pledge of 23,000 units by 2031 and Long-Term Forecast. The historic rate of growth from 2006-2021 has been 625 units. To achieve this pledge, the City would require a substantial increase in housing starts, an average of 2,300 units per year from 2022-2031 (pp. 34-37).
- Based on Barrie's proposed greenfield development density, and typical suburban greenfield density, it is anticipated Barrie will run out of greenfield land needed to accommodate its planned density or typical suburban density in approximately 2041. It will need between 265 (654 acres) hectares and 630 hectares (1,557 acres) to accommodate its residential and community lands needs (commercial, small-scale employment, parks, institutional, etc.). Hemson is also suggesting that if an annexation is being considered an additional range of 125 (309 acres) ha to 300 ha (741 acres) of employment land be provided so that the expanded area can be developed as a complete community (p. 48).
- The Township of Oro-Medonte's Official Plan does not contemplate the creation of new settlement areas (pp. 40-43) and the development of residential/community uses adjacent to Barrie would require the need for servicing agreements and associated governance structure should Municipal borders be maintained (p.49).

Hemson outlined two options for future discussion:

1. Maintain municipal boundaries

- Surrounding municipalities to absorb growth
- Servicing Agreements and potential regional governance model required over time

2. Adjust municipal boundaries

- Annexation of lands to accommodate the City of Barrie's land needs

Following receipt of the Hemson Report, Council passed a motion to receive the report indicating:

1. "That the Township of Oro-Medonte continue to engage with the Office of the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator, Hemson Consulting, and the Township of Springwater, the City of Barrie and the County of Simcoe to develop a draft work plan to further review, support, and consider the options identified in the report, and the costs to complete the proposed scope of work;

2. That staff report back to Council with recommended next steps, proposed work plan, and associated costs at the January 2025 Council meeting”

Hemson made the same presentation to Township of Springwater and City of Barrie Council.

Springwater Township Direction

Springwater Council received the presentation and supported continuing to engage with the Office of the Provincial Land and Development Facilitator, Hemson Consulting, the City of Barrie, Township of Oro-Medonte, and the County of Simcoe to consider Stage 3 scope of work.

City of Barrie Direction

After the presentation and question and answer period was over, Barrie Council passed the following motion:

“Whereas The City of Barrie, is forecast to experience significant population and employment growth to 2051;

And Whereas to address this growth, Hemson Consulting was jointly retained to evaluate the need for additional employment and residential lands at the boundaries of City of Barrie/Township of Springwater and City of Barrie/Township of Oro-Medonte;

And Whereas the findings of Joint Needs Analysis and Study Stage 1 and 2 completed by Hemson Consulting determined that there is a need for an additional 930 hectares (2298 acres) of land for comprehensive community/employment area uses and residential development in the City of Barrie which could be addressed through a boundary adjustment;

And Whereas the study findings, of the vacant lands within the City of Barrie were identified, the natural heritage areas that exist within these vacant lands, with several of the parcels of land being vacant within Barrie’s existing boundary as a result of them being undevelopable was not addressed as part of this Study; And Whereas upon review of the 2009 Barrie Innisfil annexation, Bill 196 adjusted the City of Barrie’s Boundary to include 2,293 hectares of land, with 61% of it being deemed developable and the remaining being natural heritage/environmentally protected;

And Whereas upon review of the previous data and in consideration of lands within the City of Barrie, it would be reasonable to consider that approximately 60% of lands within a new expanded area would be developable;

And Whereas the City of Barrie owns most vacant parcels of land surrounding Little Lake;

And Whereas the City of Barrie will be working with the Province of Ontario to establish a Protection Plan for the lands surrounding Little Lake;

And Whereas for the City to achieve the 2,300 acres of developable land as identified within the Hemson Study, the City of Barrie would require approximately 4,000 acres of gross land, a much larger number than initially proposed by the City of Barrie to the Townships of Springwater and Oro-Medonte;

And Whereas it is understood by all parties that there will be no servicing provided to the subject neighbouring municipalities without a boundary adjustment; and

Therefore be It resolved, that given the information contained within the Joint Needs Analysis and Study Stage 1 and 2 completed by Hemson Consulting, the City of Barrie's experience with developable lands within the City's boundary and historical experience with the 2009 annexation, the initial land request proposals to the Townships of Springwater and Oro-Medonte be reassessed to better respect and identify the City's demonstrated need for vacant land required for comprehensive community employment lands and residential housing, in order to meet Provincial targets; and

That an updated request to include the Little Lake Area Lands in addition to the 4000 acres of gross land, be forwarded to the Province of Ontario and Provincial Land Facilitator with a request for this matter to be dealt with in an expeditious manner; and

That the Mayor and CAO continue with the meeting identified by the Provincial Land Facilitator to negotiate an update to the City of Barrie's border with neighbouring municipalities and staff report back on January 8, 2025 with the scope of work to proceed with Stage 3 to identify Barrie's border with neighbouring municipalities and,

That as part of the report back, staff verify the developable industrial land needs identified by Hemson"

In summary, after hearing the same presentation that Oro-Medonte Council heard, Barrie Council has determined that it needs “930 hectares (2,298 acres) of land for comprehensive community/employment area uses and residential development”. Further, Barrie Council indicated that 1,618 hectares (4,000 acres) are required as it estimates that 40% of any lands to be annexed is undevelopable due to its experience with the Innisfil annexation.

The only justification provided during the meeting were three examples of individual developments within the City and the City’s experience in developing the annexed Innisfil lands.

County of Simcoe

In response to the Hemson report, the County released a [statement](#) on the analysis and findings of the report as well as potential implications on regional employment and residential growth.

As a next step the Township of Oro-Medonte, the Township of Springwater, the City of Barrie and County of Simcoe are to agree on the Terms of Reference for the Stage 3 Analysis. The purpose of this report is to present options and a recommended direction for Council’s consideration.

Analysis

Hemson Proposed Stage 3 Analysis

On December 17, 2024, Hemson circulated a Preliminary Scope of Work proposal along with a budget estimate for proposed Stage 3 work. Stage 3 would involve the following phases:

Phase 1 – finalize Stage 3 scope of work, establish up to three growth scenarios for testing within the Study Area and develop municipal and sub-municipal growth forecasts for each scenario.

Phase 2 – conduct a technical analysis of each scenario, including assessments of engineering service costs and mapping of environmentally constrained areas. Findings will be summarized in detailed memoranda.

Phase 3 – prepare and deliver a comprehensive report of findings and recommendations.

Phase 4 – facilitate consultation sessions with the participating municipalities (staff and Council) as well as external stakeholders, including indigenous groups, public agencies, and the general public.

Preliminary Estimate of Cost for all phases - \$582,780 (subject to review following Phase 1).

Staff reviewed the Stage 2 report presented to Council on December 11, 2024 and the proposed work plan for Stage 3 and offer the following points:

1. The original proposal to Oro-Medonte from the City of Barrie was for employment lands. Stage 2 findings concluded that Barrie did not need additional employment lands to meet its projections to 2051. Further, its short-term need could not be satisfied with the Oro-Medonte lands due to servicing, transportation and environmental constraints.
2. Stage 2 findings included employment lands only if annexation is being considered so that any lands annexed could be developed as a complete community.
3. Community Area lands include local employment uses.
4. The new Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 amends the definition of employment lands to narrow scope to manufacturing, warehousing, movement of goods, ancillary retail and office uses only. Institutional, Retail and Office uses not associated with the primary employment use are not included in definition.
5. The City of Barrie's population targets outlined in its Official Plan do not appear reasonable given the density of development occurring in its built-up areas and green field areas.
6. In February of 2023 Barrie pledged to "facilitate the construction" of 23,000 housing units by 2031 or 2,875 units in each of eight years. Barrie [reports](#) that: 3,422 dwelling units started between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2024. An over 40% shortfall of 2,328 units over the two-year period. As outlined in the Hemson Report achieving this target would "far exceed any single year's peak housing start during Barrie's growth surge in the late 1990's and early 2000's and would be four times the recent annual average of 600 units per year between 2006 and 2021. Even if Barrie was to acquire additional lands for development, it would be unrealistic to assume that these lands could be brought to market and developed prior to 2031.
7. Hemson has confirmed that its calculations for anticipated community land needed by the City of Barrie of 265 ha or 630 ha (scenario 1 and 2 respectively) are net of developable land needs.
8. The need for housing in the area is being met by all municipalities in the Barrie Census area – Barrie, Innisfil, Essa, Springwater and Oro-Medonte.
9. The Stage 3 workplan continues to be limited to the defined study area proposed by the City of Barrie in its original request and does not take into account regional growth considerations or the assertion from the City of Barrie on its need for an additional 930 hectares (2298 acres) of land.
10. The new PPS, 2024 directs that a coordinated, integrated and comprehensive approach should be used when dealing with planning matters within municipalities, across lower, single and/or upper-tier municipal boundaries,

Based on these points, staff propose the following three options for consideration:

Options Moving Forward

Option 1

That Oro-Medonte continues to engage with the Provincial Land Development Facilitator, Township of Springwater, City of Barrie and the County of Simcoe based on the Terms of Reference outlined by Hemson for the Stage 3 Study and Analysis.

That the cost of the analysis pertaining to Little Lake be broken out separately.

That Oro-Medonte only pays its proportional costs relating to refining employment land needs, water and wastewater servicing review and financial impact analysis.

Option 2

- a) That Oro-Medonte disengage from the facilitation process as it has been determined that Barrie has sufficient employment lands to 2051.
- b) Alternatively, Council could consider limiting the scope of facilitation to community/residential uses and/or;
- c) Seek to engage with the City of Barrie about cross border servicing outside the facilitation process.

Option 3 (recommended)

Council inform the Provincial Land Development Facilitator that Stage 3 of the Land Needs Analysis and Study be scoped to only include a single phase as a next step to determine the following before considering further phases:

1. Develop revised long-term forecasts to 2051 for population, households, housing by type, employment and employment by type for the participating municipalities to 2051, as well as detailed forecasts for any lands being considered in the boundary adjustment – (From Hemson Stage 3 Recommended Work Plan). Including:
 - a. Verify amount of currently designated developable employment lands by type (manufacturing vs. commercial) available in the City of Barrie is sufficient to 2051 since the definition of employment lands changed in new PPS, 2024.
 - b. Determine if the population targets in Barrie’s Official Plan are reasonable given the land available within the City of Barrie boundary and the density provisions in place (Barrie planned density versus typical suburban density).
 - c. Undertake market demand assessment and review of empirical growth rates to inform the establishment of three growth scenarios and considerations/implications to the Barrie census area.
 - d. Calculate developable land available in Barrie versus total land needs (40% non-development factor)

- e. Request that Hemson verify the City of Barrie’s assertion that 40% of any annexed lands is non-development land. Costing to be determined following the scoping of Stage 3.

Staff will report back to Council and seek direction on further actions following discussion with Provincial Land Development Facilitator on recommended next steps.

Recommended Direction

Staff have reviewed the Stage 2 report and the City of Barrie response in detail and have determined that there are a number of outstanding questions with respect to the amount of land the City of Barrie is stating as being required.

Staff are of the view that it is important there is congruence with objective baseline land needs data before undertaking any additional analysis relating to the options Hemson has outlined. In that regard, staff are recommending that Council advise the Office of the Provincial Land Development Facilitator that it is prepared to support a scoped Stage 3 Study and Analysis as outlined in Option 3. Staff would report back to Council following further discussion on the scope of work and proportionate costing.

Financial/Legal Implications/ Risk Management

The Budget for the Stage 1 and 2 Joint Land Needs Analysis and Study was \$53,000 and the Township’s share was 20% or \$10,600.

The preliminary estimate of costs for Stage 3 is \$582,780. Staff will not know the estimated cost of Stage 3 Phase 1 until the scope of work is finalized and agreed upon. Staff intend to return to Council to seek direction on any future cost sharing.

Corporate Strategic Priorities

- Financial Sustainability
- Well Planned Development
- Employment Lands
- Community Engagement and Trust

Consultation/Engagement

The Township of Oro-Medonte has developed a dedicated webpage on the website regarding the City of Barrie’s boundary expansion request. The following information is available by visiting oro-medonte.ca/cbber:

1. Background information;
2. Frequently asked questions;
3. Hemson Consulting reports and presentations;
4. Detailed staff reports;
5. The presentation provided by Hemson Consulting at the Wednesday, December 11, 2024 Council meeting including Council’s discussion; and

6. Public statements and media releases.

Please note additional/new information will be provided on the dedicated webpage. To keep up-to-date, Oro-Medonte residents are encouraged to check oro-medonte.ca/cbber often.

Conclusion

The Stage 2 *Joint Lands Needs Assessment and Study* was presented to Oro-Medonte Council on December 11, 2024. The study concluded that Barrie appears to have sufficient employment lands to meet its needs, however, Barrie will need additional land in the range of 265 hectares (654 acres) to 630 hectares (1,557 acres) in the Springwater and Oro-Medonte area for residential and community use purposes.

From its review of the Stage 2 Report, City of Barrie Council has concluded that it needs 1,618 hectares (4,000 acres) of additional land as it estimates that 40% of any lands to be annexed is undevelopable due to its experience with the Innisfil annexation.

Hemson Consulting has made recommendations with respect to further analysis and studies as Part of a Stage 3 Study that includes four phases at an estimated cost of \$582,780.

Staff are of the view that it is important there is congruence with objective baseline land needs data before undertaking any additional analysis relating to the options Hemson has outlined. In this regard, staff are recommending that Council advise the Office of the Provincial Land Development Facilitator that it is prepared to support a scoped Phase 3 Study and Analysis as outlined herein. Staff would report back to Council following further discussion with the Provincial Land Development Facilitator regarding the scope of work and proportionate costing.

Respectfully submitted,

George Vadeboncoeur,
Manager, Planning Special Projects

January 7, 2025

Shawn Binns
Chief Administrative Officer

January 15, 2025