



Highway 404 Corridor: Provincially Significant Employment Zones

Landowner's Meeting

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
Development Services

July 18, 2019



OFFICIAL
PLAN
REVIEW



Agenda

- Introductions
- Background
- Policy Framework
- Provincially Significant Employment Zones
- Submission to the Province
- Next Steps

NEWS
STOUFFVILLE SEEKS DEVELOPMENT ON HWY. 404

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Warning: Whitechurch-Stouffville's future financial health depends on commercial and industrial development along Hwy. 404, council is asking the provincial government to designate properties along Ontario's 400-series highways as employment lands.

"Everyone knows Gormley and the entire 404 corridor is our future," Ward 3 Coun. Hugo Kroon said.

Council's move comes as the provincial government has introduced legislation known as Bill 66 or Restoring Ontario's Competitive Act, which would let municipalities seek permission to bypass several longstanding laws meant to protect the environment such as the Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine.

The province would only consider approving the open-for-business zones if they create at least 50 jobs in communities with population of less than 250,000 or at least 100 jobs in larger municipalities.

With residential assessment in Whitechurch-Stouffville topping 90 per cent, putting an extremely heavy burden on homeowners to pay the municipality's property tax bill, securing commercial and industrial development is crucial, Kroon said.

If approved, non-residential development along the 404 would reflect provincial policies of decades ago that intended to see employment lands developed close to 400-series highways, he said.

"In the '70s, I used to live along the 404 when it was being built and that's what they told us, your land is going to be valuable because it's commercial/industrial. Well, then someone decided that Whitechurch-Stouffville was going to get the short end of the stick and the Oak Ridges Moraine (legislation) was going to be dumped on top of that and we were out," Kroon said.

"I believe this provincial government is going to change that back. It's going to give us what we deserve. There's no reason why a provincial government would expect a municipality to have nothing but residential."

Whitchurch-Stouffville Coun. Hugo Kroon wants the provincial government to consider allowing commercial/industrial development along Hwy. 404 in Gormley. Proposed provincial legislation will allow non-residential developments that will create jobs to bypass the legislation protecting the Greenbelt.



Mike Barnett/Metroand

Whitchurch-Stouffville Coun. Hugo Kroon wants the provincial government to consider allowing commercial/industrial development along Hwy. 404 in Gormley. Proposed provincial legislation will allow non-residential developments that will create jobs to bypass the legislation protecting the Greenbelt.

Saying the town still "vigorously supports" provincial legislation protecting the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine, Kroon stressed the town needs to make its pitch to the province quickly to gain favour.

At the same time, asking Queen's Park to designate land close to all 400-series highways as provincially significant employment lands shows the town isn't being greedy, he said.

However, Ward 1 Coun. Ken Ferdinands and Ward 2 Coun. Maurice Smith argued council should keep its focus on Whitechurch-Stouffville's needs.

While critics have raised concerns about the proposed legislation, Mayor Ian Lovatt said council doesn't want to pave over environmentally sensitive lands.

"I do want to put everyone's minds at ease ... (who fears) this is just the start of us running roughshod over the Greenbelt. That is not the intention. The intention is a very focused area on the 404," Lovatt said.

"It is not going up into Ballantrae or into the Oak Ridges Moraine core area. That's not it at all. This is a very strategic plan for our municipality to grow our tax base that is going to fund the infrastructure needs and ... programming for my grandkids and our future. Without it, we're going to be in serious trouble."

Council appears to be rushing into giving up Greenbelt lands for development, Arnold Neufeldt Fast, who campaigned to protect the Greenbelt when he ran for mayor in 2014, said.

Town staff will report back to council later with a detailed proposal for the Gormley lands seeking provincial approval.

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Town pushes for commercial and industrial development at Gormley

5 STOUFFVILLE REVIEW

In anticipation of the province giving the final okay on Bill 66, a piece of legislation which will allow some changes in land use within what is the Oak Ridges Moraine, Town of Whitechurch-Stouffville officials are asking for changes in at the provincial level that affect the township.

They have formally asked the province to consider designating lands close to 400-series highways in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) as Provincially Significant Employment Areas. The request, if granted, would encourage commercial and industrial development along the Highway 404 corridor in western Whitechurch-Stouffville.

Ward 3 Councillor Hugo Kroon, whose ward includes much of the township's 404 corridor lands, as much of the land in question before the provincial Liberal government passed moraine "green-belt" legislation that has taken place near the Gormley area near Stouffville Rd. and Woodbine Ave., but the true economic benefit for the area remained buried under the green-land designation.

The lands that the town specifically wants to open again is the stretch of land south of Bethesda between the 404 and Woodbine and a couple of pockets on the East side of Woodbine that already have some development. But until changes happen, other municipalities, including Markham to the South and Aurora to the North-West happily go about developing their corridor land, and Stouffville is currently frozen out.

"Look at that (construction) crane over there," Kroon says as he points north from the Bethesda, Highway 404 overpass. "You don't see any of that on our side." He goes on to note that Stouffville is the municipal-404 corridors not to be able to control its destiny in terms of developing, not just jobs in the area, but much-needed long-term revenue. "We want (to be given) the opportunity to increase our assessment so we don't become, either non-functional or a burden on anybody" notes Kroon.

"The town has a significant amount of land along Highway 404 in Gormley and that land is highly attractive for employment growth," said Mayor Ian Lovatt. "It is vital that we attract more commercial and industrial development to help augment our tax base and the development of these lands would be of great benefit to our municipality."

The request also asks the province to "permit and encourage clean industrial development on the lands designated in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2017) and the Greenbelt Plan (2017)" within these lands.

This call for the ability to access commercial and industrial development is one echoed by all other members of council as they see that the dwindling residential development is not sufficient to maintain long-term municipal financial health.

But while critics of Bill 66 are already lining up against changes, positioning it as an all-out assault on the environment, Kroon at times the request they presented is not about "Whitchurch-Stouffville vigorously supports the intent and application of both the Greenbelt Act and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act," said Ward 3 Councillor Hugo Kroon, who tabled the motion.

"However, not all industrial developments pose a threat to the environment. Permitting clean industrial development will not only help create jobs but also recoup the cost of the investment and recapture the value of the 400-series highways," Kroon said.

"Whitchurch-Stouffville is in desperate need for employment growth."

Town staff will report back to council later with a detailed proposal for the Gormley lands for provincial approval.



Stouffville has formally requested that the provincial government allow development along the Highway 404 corridor below Bethesda Rd. Ward 3 Councillor Hugo Kroon (left) and Stouffville Mayor Ian Lovatt at the Bethesda Highway 404 overpass.

Background

- Town Council Resolution, December 2018
- Proposed Growth Plan Amendment, January 2019
- Town comments on Proposed Growth Plan, February 2019
- Regional Council Resolution, March 2019
- New Growth Plan, May 2019:
 - Did not identify any PSEZs in the Town
 - Province committed to reviewing requests and may identify additional PSEZs in Fall, 2019

13. Resolutions from Council

1. Resolution from Councillor Kroon, re: Employment Growth Along Highway 404

Moved by Councillor Kroon
Seconded by Councillor Bartley

Whereas the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville continues to vigorously support the intent and application of both the Greenbelt Act (2005) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act (2001); and

Whereas the "countryside area" or "protected countryside" designations in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2017) and Greenbelt Plan (2017) respectively are not sensitive environmental areas; and

Whereas all lands along the 400-series highways are very attractive to industrial development due to their ease of access to the highway network; and

Whereas not all industrial developments are a threat to the environment; and

Whereas permitting clean industrial development will not only help create jobs, but also recoup cost of the investment in and recapture the value of the 400-series highways; and

Whereas the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has a significant amount of land along Highway 404, that are highly attractive for employment growth; and

Whereas the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is in desperate need for employment growth.

Therefore be it resolved, that the Province of Ontario be requested to consider designating appropriate lands abutting a 400-series highway in the GTHA "Provincially Significant Employment Areas"; and

That the Province of Ontario be requested to amend all its applicable land use plans to permit and encourage clean industrial development on the lands designated "countryside area" or "protected countryside" generally abutting a 400-series highway, and

That the Province of Ontario be further requested to direct all affected municipalities to give high priority to servicing these lands; and

That staff be directed to report back with a detailed proposal for the Gormley lands along Highway 404 within the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville for Council consideration and Provincial approval.

Carried

Why Highway 404 Corridor?

- Strategic location
- Highly visible/attractive
- Access to major transportation corridors
- Economic resource
- Utilize existing infrastructure
- Logical extension of existing employment areas
- Local job creation

Aurora Road

Vandorf

Preston Lake

Bethesda

Bethesda Road

Stouffville Road

Gormley

19th Avenue

Highway 404

Woodbine Avenue

Ballantrae

Lemonville

Policy Framework

“A Place to Grow”

- Promotes economic development.
- Municipalities are to “designate and preserve lands” within settlement areas located near major good movement facilities and corridors, including major highway interchanges.
- Minister may identify additional PSEZs.
- Region’s MCR to allocate growth and assess need for settlement expansions.
- **Current policy framework does not provide sufficient flexibility for the Town to designate additional employment lands (i.e., MCR).**



Provincially Significant Employment Zones:

“Areas defined by the Minister in consultation with affected municipalities for the purpose of long-term planning for job creation and economic development. Provincially significant employment zones can consist of employment areas as well as mixed-use areas that contain a significant number of jobs.”

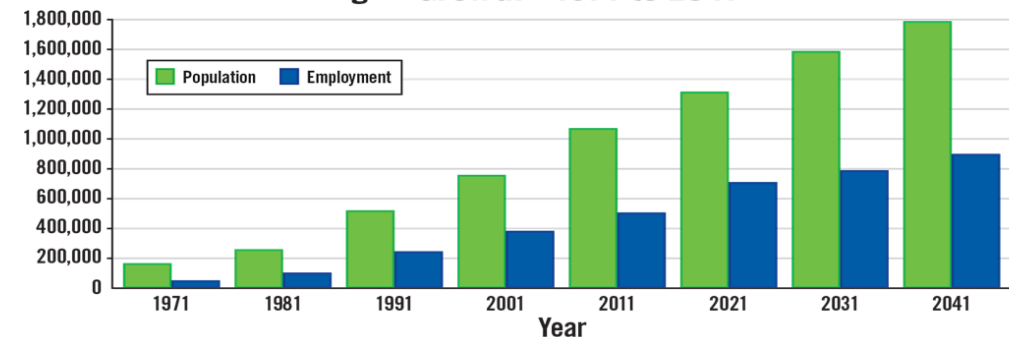
York Region's **population** is expected to grow from

1.2 MILLION in 2017 to **1.8** MILLION in 2041

York Region's **employment** is expected to grow from

621 THOUSAND in 2017 to **900** THOUSAND in 2041

York Region Growth - 1971 to 2041





Search: Find address or place

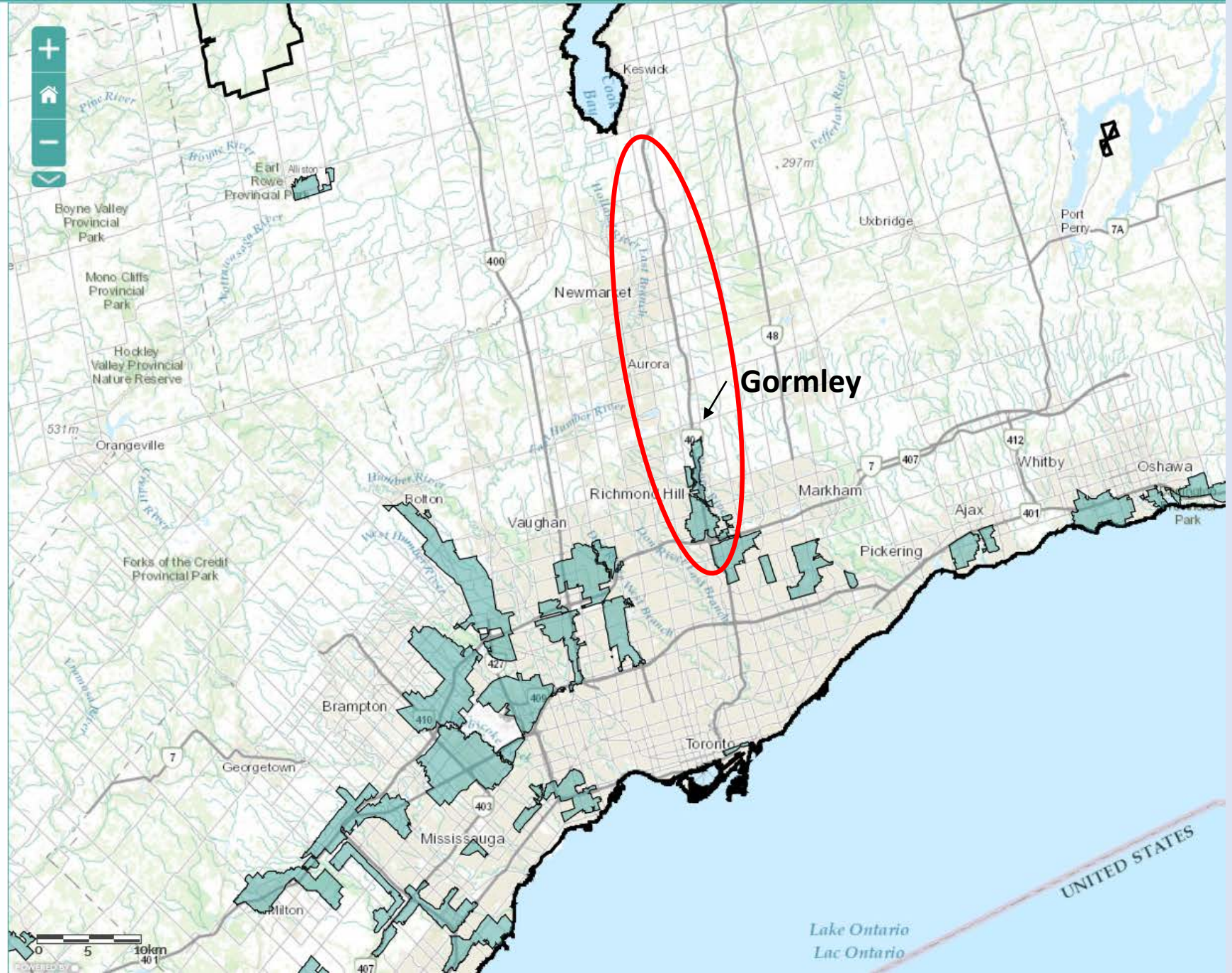
Details

As part of [A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#), the Minister released a new policy framework for protecting employment areas that are critical to the region's economy. These changes provide flexibility by allowing municipalities to consider employment area conversions prior to the municipal comprehensive review while ensuring protections are in place to protect key employment areas as needed.

To ensure important employment areas are not converted during this window, the province introduced a policy that allows the Minister to identify [provincially significant employment zones](#) which are employment areas that cannot be converted prior to the municipal comprehensive review without a more comprehensive assessment approved by the province.

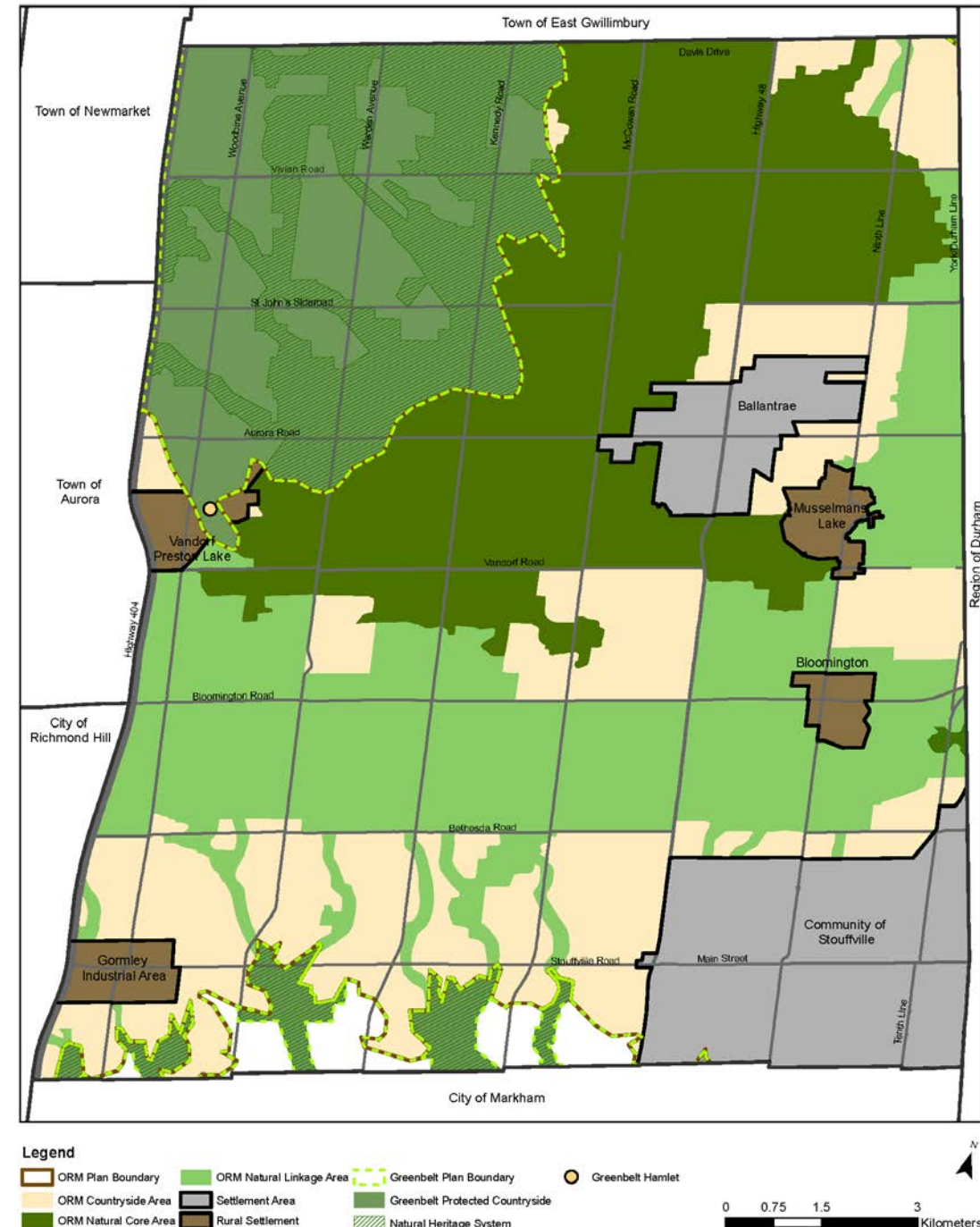
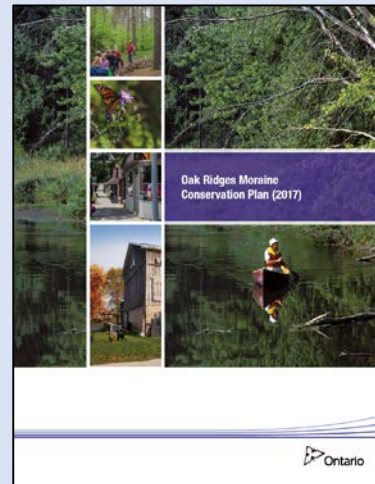
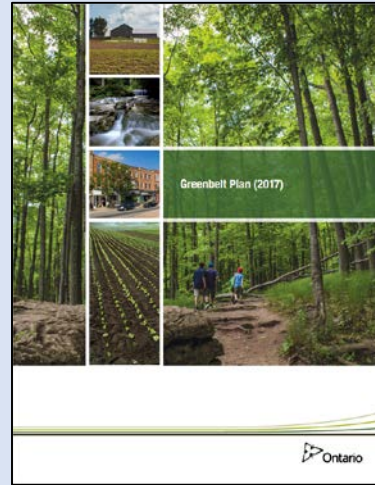
In addition to the mouse you may:

- Use **Tab** key to navigate from item to item.
- Use **SHIFT Tab** to navigate backwards.
- Hit **SPACE bar** to toggle a focused check box.
- Press **ENTER** to activate the focused item.
- Press **Alt + Arrow-Down** to expand a combo box.
- Use **Alt** with a number to fast navigate (hint will display.)
- Use **ESCAPE** to go to the parent of the focus



Policy Framework Greenbelt Area

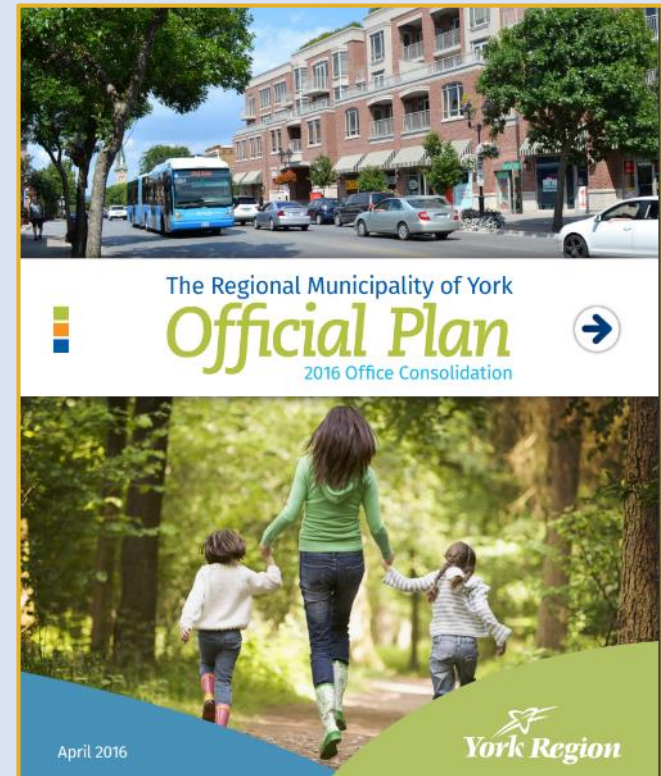
- Official Plans must conform to Greenbelt Plan and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan:
 - Natural heritage system
 - Agricultural system
- Additional criteria on settlement area expansions



York Region Official Plan

Municipal Comprehensive Review

- The MCR is a process that the Region is undertaking to update their official plan to conform to the Growth Plan.
- Anticipate Regional Council Adoption by end of 2020.
- Region's MCR to provide policy direction on:
 - growth allocations to the local municipalities
 - need for settlement boundary expansions
 - employment area conversions
 - employment density targets



Town's Official Plan Review

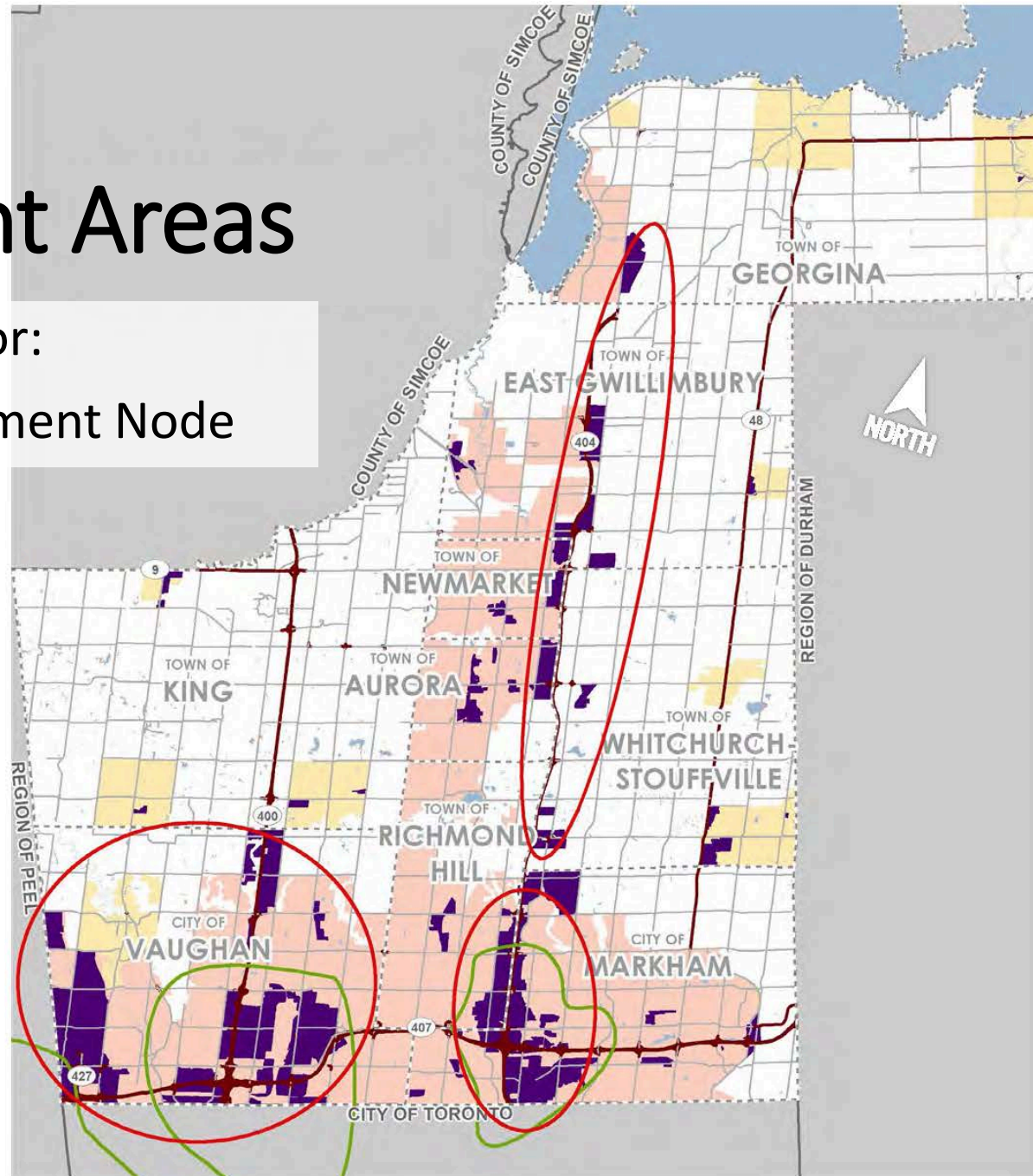
- Updates to the Town's Official Plan are required:
 - Conform to Provincial Plans
 - Conform to Region's new Official Plan
 - Direct growth and development to 2041
- Last comprehensive update in 2004
- Official Plan is required to be updated within 1 year of approval of the Region's new Official Plan

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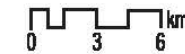
Existing Employment Areas

Highway 404 Corridor:
York Region Employment Node



YORK REGION EMPLOYMENT AREAS, 2017

- EMPLOYMENT AREA BOUNDARY
- NEPTIS MEGAZONE BOUNDARY
- YORK REGION EMPLOYMENT NODE
- TOWNS and VILLAGES
- URBAN AREA
- LAKE/RIVER
- HIGHWAY
- ROAD
- RAILWAY
- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
- REGIONAL BOUNDARY



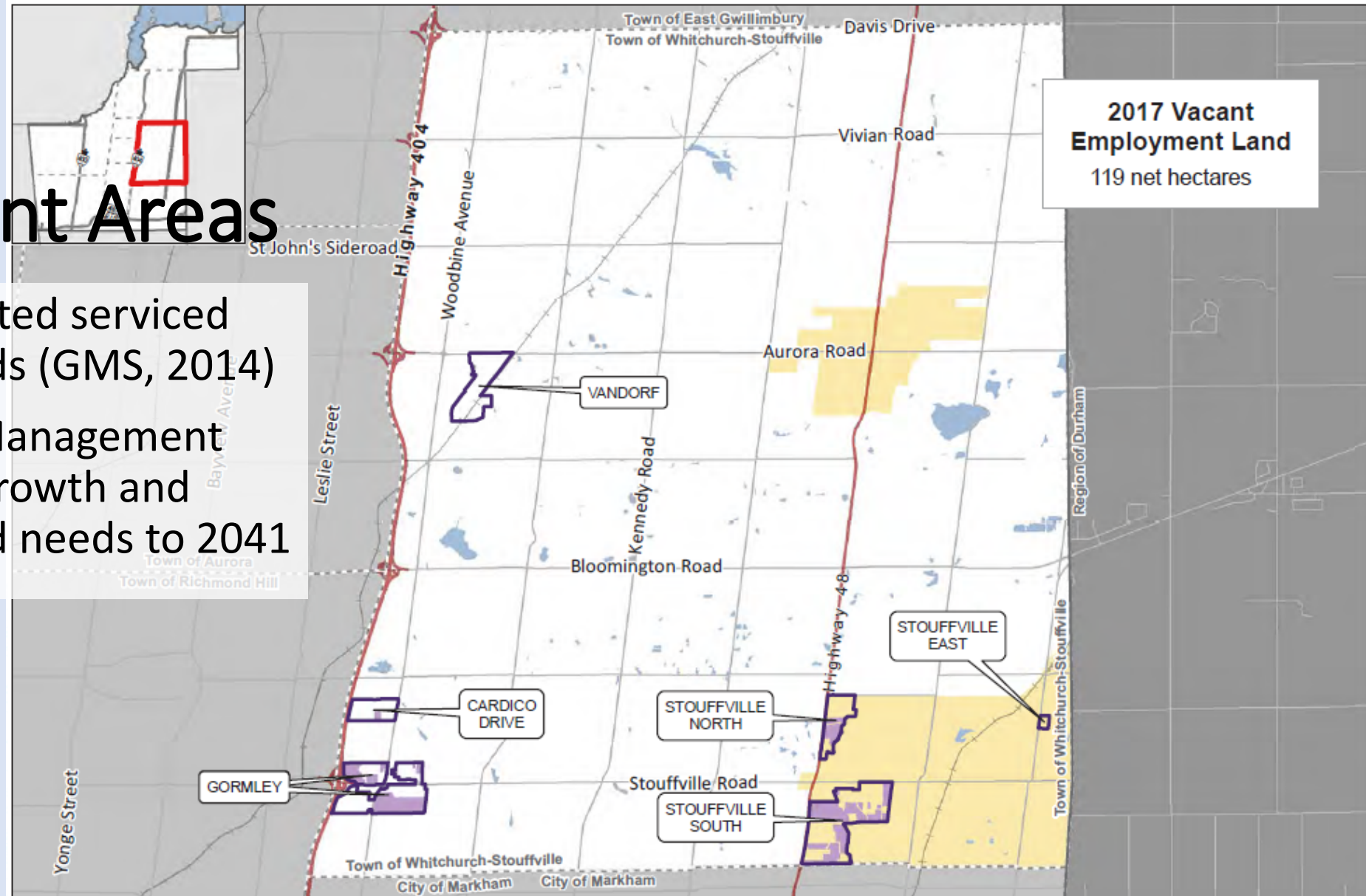
Produced by: The Regional Municipality of York,
Planning and Economic Development, Corporate Services
April 2019
Data: © Queen's Printer for Ontario 2003-2019

Note: Employment area boundaries are subject to change
through the Regional Municipal Comprehensive Review and
Land Needs Assessment.



Existing Employment Areas

- Need for designated serviced employment lands (GMS, 2014)
- Town's Growth Management Study to assess growth and employment land needs to 2041



2017 Vacant Employment Land
119 net hectares

York Region

TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE
York Region 2017 Vacant Employment Land Inventory

Produced by:
The Regional Municipality of York
Planning and Economic Development,
Corporate Services
March 2018

Data: © Queen's Printer for Ontario
2003-2018

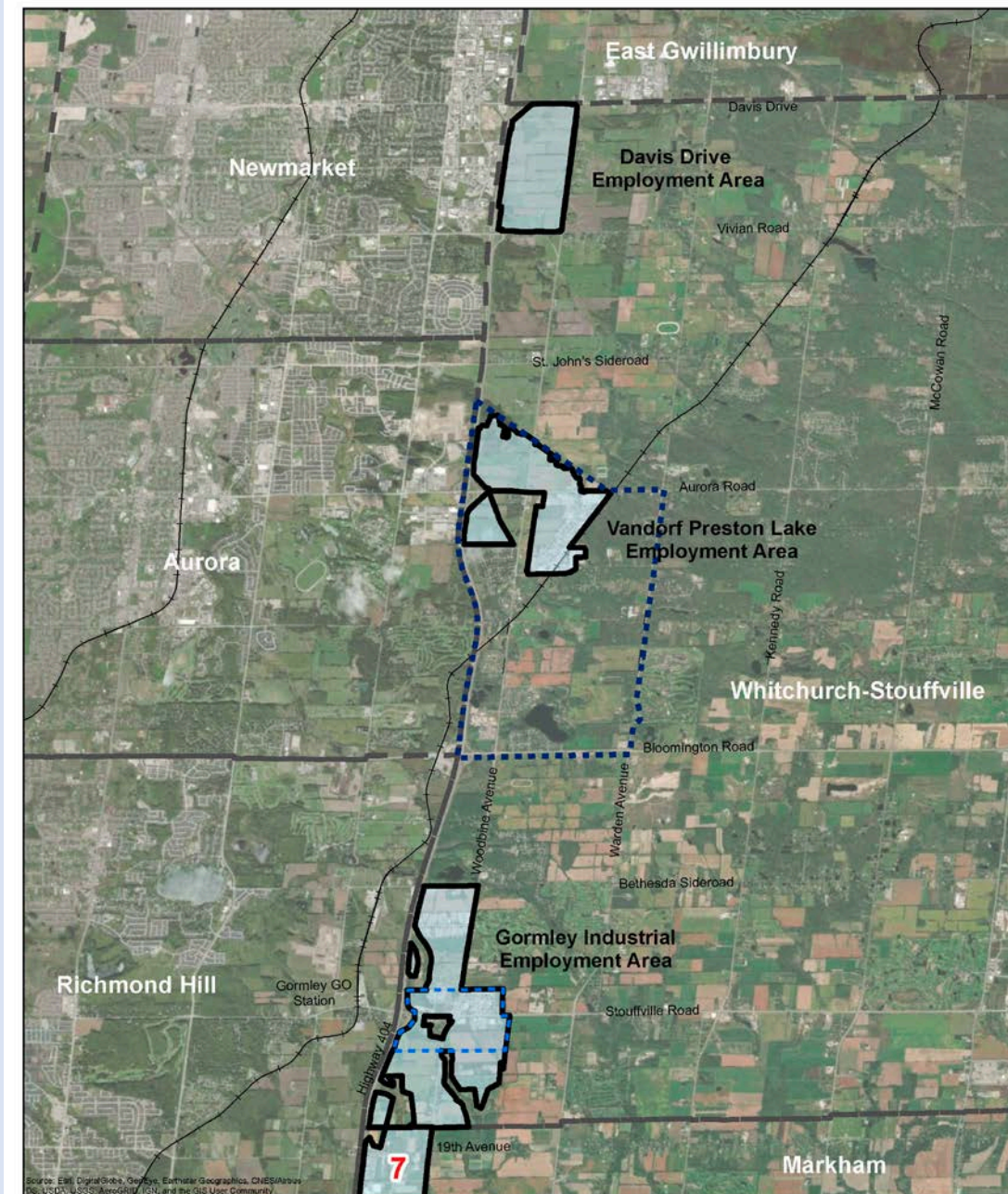
Legend

Employment Area Boundary	Highway
Vacant Parcels	Road
Towns and Villages	Railway
Urban Area	Municipal Boundary
Lake/River	Regional Boundary

Scale: 0 1 2 Km

Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zones

- Town requested the Province to identify 3 PSEZs:
 - Gormley (Stouffville Road)
 - Vandorf Preston Lake (Aurora Road)
 - Davis Drive (Davis Drive & Vivian Road)
- Located at key interchanges
- Least sensitive environmental areas
- May accommodate “clean” industrial development on full municipal services (office and business park uses)
- Large contiguous parcels
- Includes existing designated employment areas



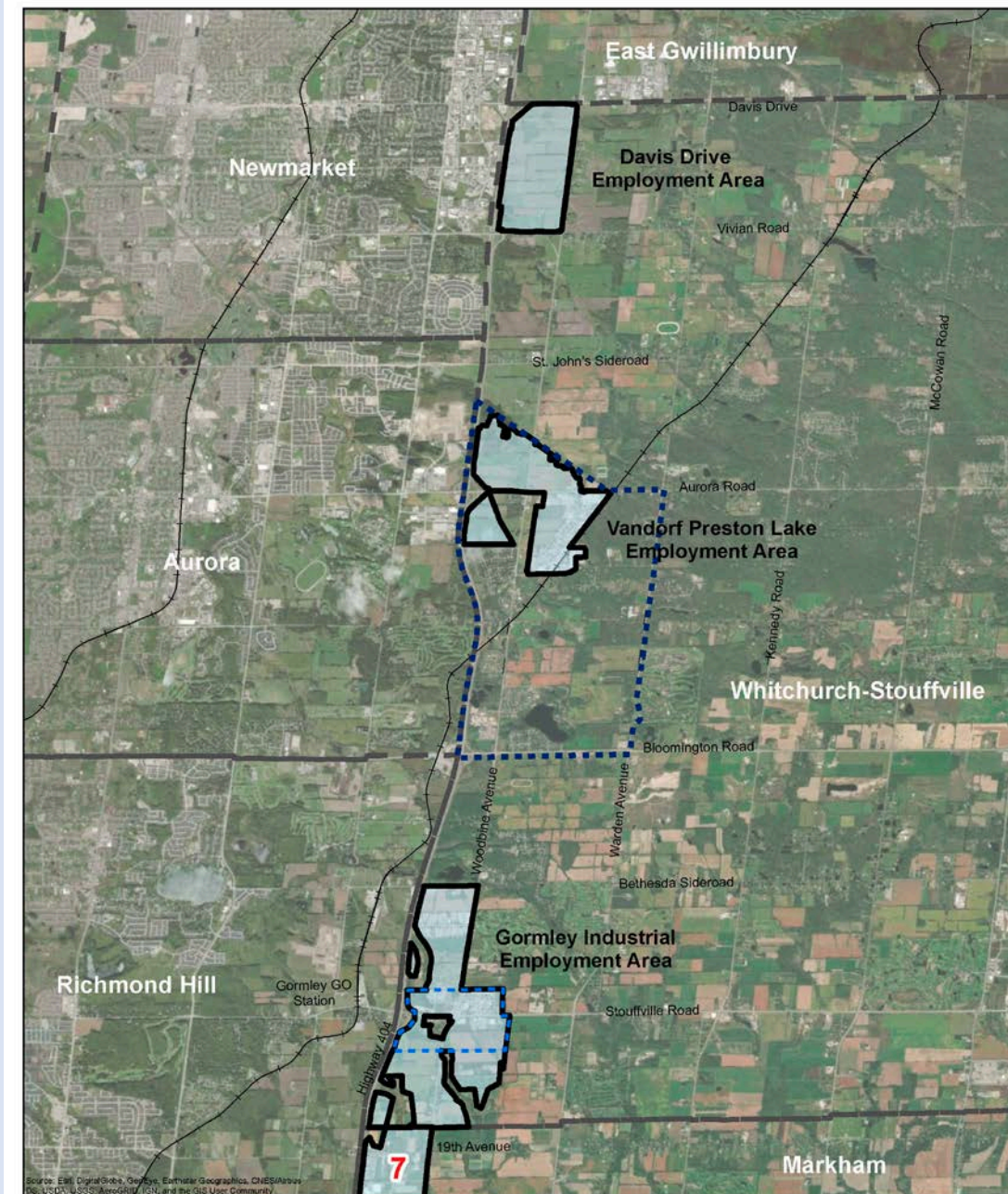
Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zone
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Legend
□ Provincially Significant Employment Zone □ Vandorf Preston Lake Secondary Plan Area □ Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area



Province's Review

- Considerations for assessment of PSEZs:
 - located inside a settlement area and not in the Greenbelt
 - not be under appeal at the LPAT
 - located near infrastructure for major transportation or movement of goods
 - have a high concentration of employment
 - have a high economic impact/role to the Region
 - be vulnerable to conversion
 - offer development potential for employment uses
 - share a common border with an existing zone



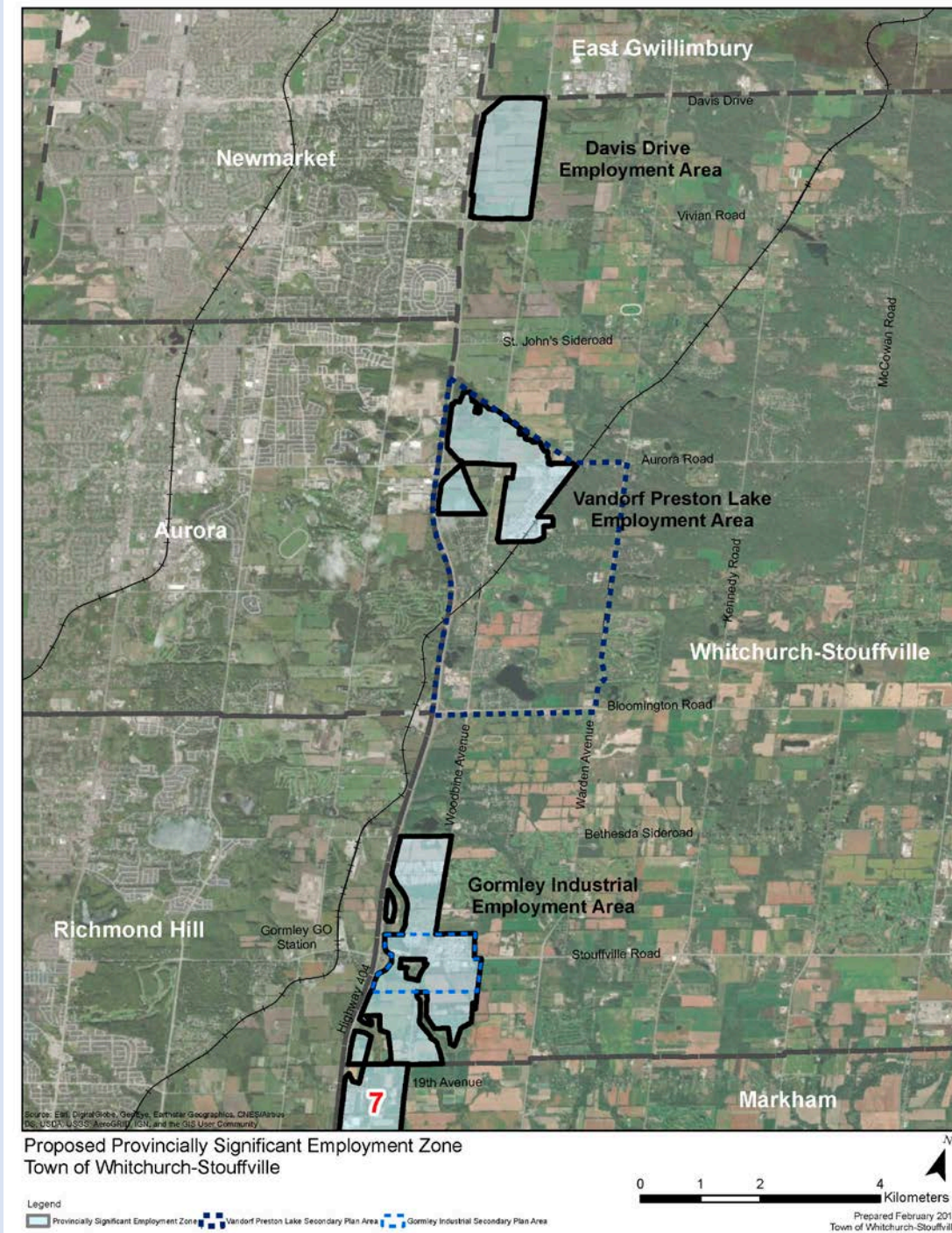
Proposed Provincially Significant Employment Zone
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Legend
■ Provincially Significant Employment Zone ■ Vandorf Preston Lake Secondary Plan Area ■ Gormley Industrial Secondary Plan Area



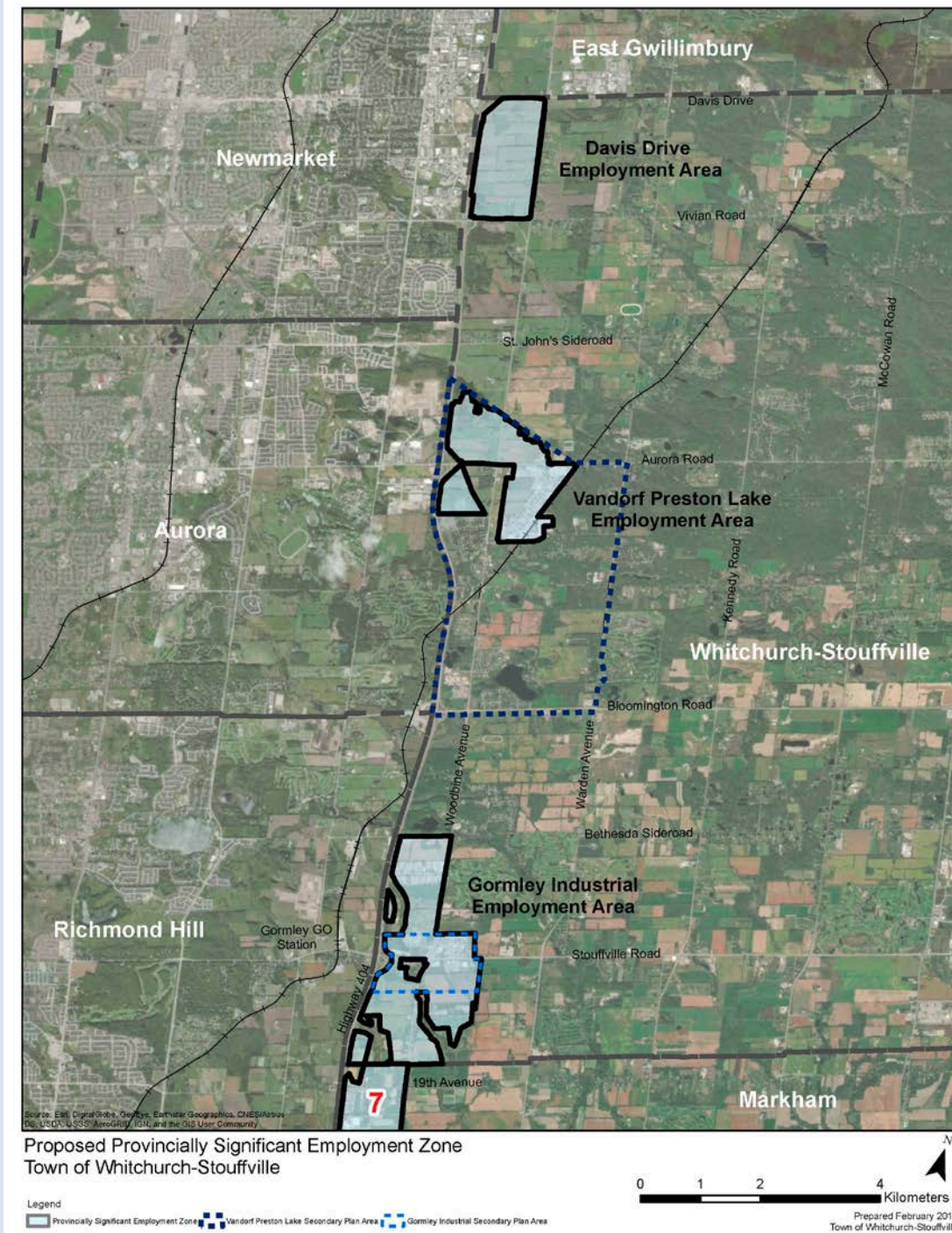
Minister's Zoning Order

- The *Planning Act* gives the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing the authority to zone any property in the province (47(1)).
- MZO sets specific requirements for new development (land use, access, servicing).
- Not commonly used, but there are instances where the Province has enacted a MZO to enable employment development.
- Subject to appropriate justification and need.



Submission to Province

- Growth Management Study (on-going):
 - Justify need for additional employment lands
 - Assess employment potential
 - Assess fiscal impact (tax base, development charges)
 - Assess suitability of lands (environmental evaluation)
- Servicing Investigations:
 - Assess opportunities for providing full municipal services
- Landowner/Development Interest



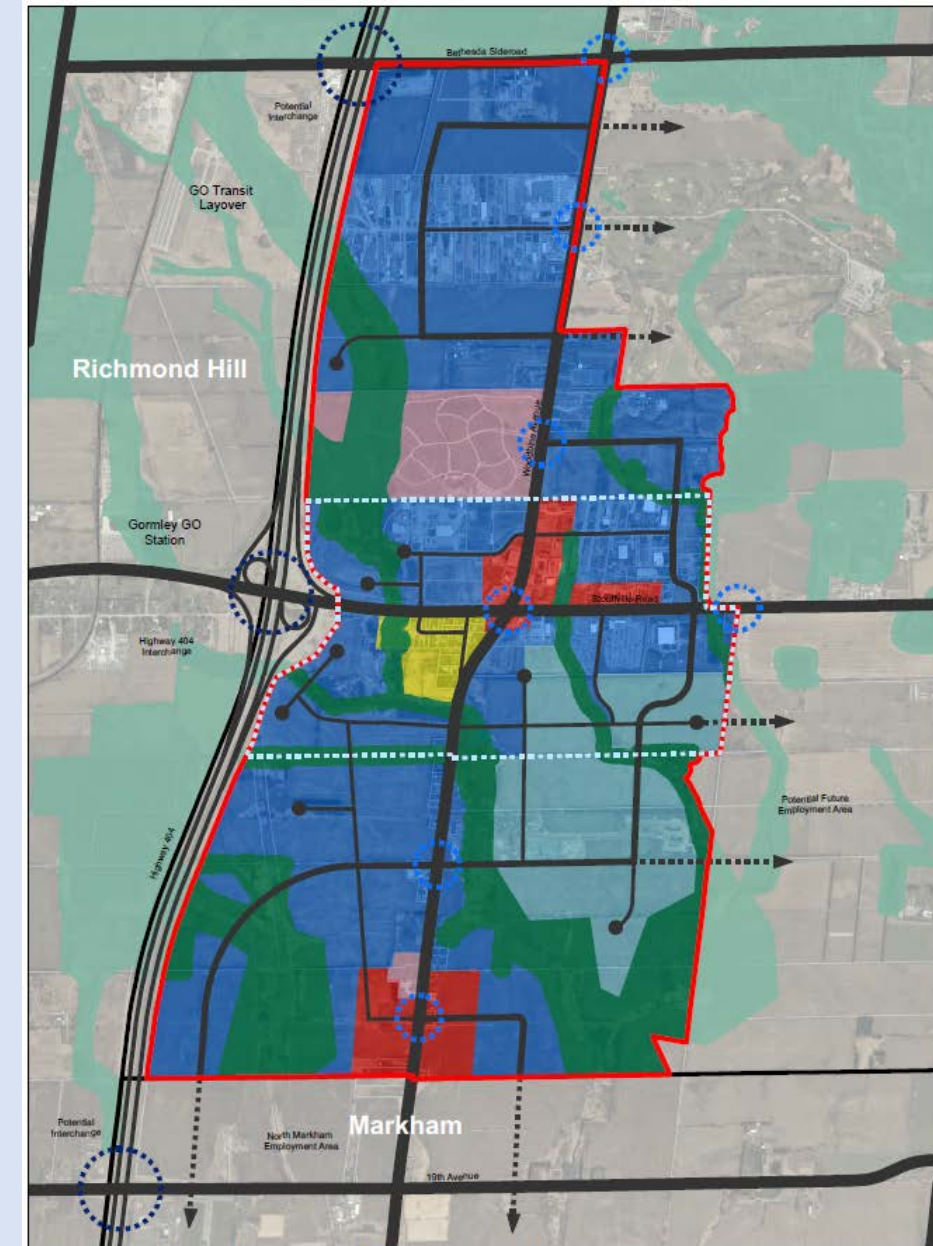
Landowner Request

- Express support for identification of additional PSEZs
- Identify employment development interest:
 - Letters of interest/intent
 - Long-term development plans
 - Major employment uses
 - Type of employment (GFA, number of jobs)
- Sensitive to existing residential areas



Next Steps

- Letters / Proposals of Employment Development Interest (July-August 2019)
- Town's Growth Management Study and Official Plan Review (ongoing)
- Work with Region through MCR (ongoing)
- Submission to the Province



Gormley Employment Expansion Area
Concept Plan



Thank you

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