

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions  
ESSA OPR AND COUNTY MCR

# Technical Memo



Where Town and Country Meet

Date:

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Prepared for:

**Township of Essa**

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Technical Memorandum is as follows:

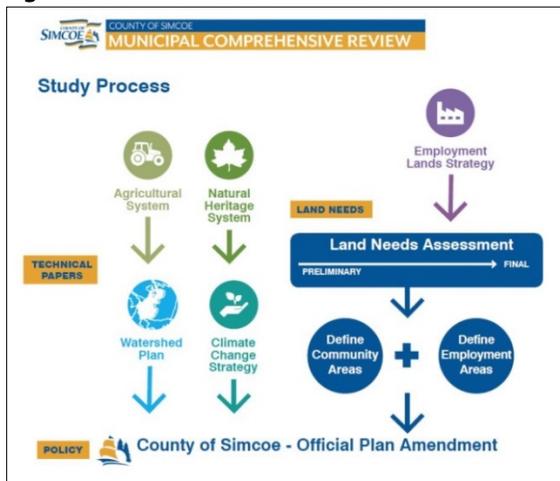
- provide background to the County Municipal Comprehensive Review and specifically the process of undertaking its land needs assessment and determining the need for new settlement lands to accommodate the forecast growth for the County through expansions to existing settlement areas;
- describe the process that the Township will follow once the County has determined what additional population and employment growth will be allocated to Essa, if any; and
- set out the process, requirements and methods to participate in the Township of Essa's Settlement Area Boundary Expansion study.

## 1.1 County MCR

The 2020 Growth Plan requires that the County of Simcoe undertake a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) to bring its Official Plan into conformity with the Growth Plan by July 1, 2022. A MCR is a comprehensive planning study that addresses a broad range of complex planning and policy matters including a growth management strategy to allocate population and employment growth to the year 2051. Ultimately, the MCR will result in an amendment or amendments to the County of Simcoe Official Plan to bring the policies and schedules into conformity with the Growth Plan. The MCR amendment to the County Official Plan will require approval from the Province of Ontario.

The County has formally launched its MCR, held a kickoff meeting with local municipal planning staff, and has published its MCR page on the County website ([Municipal Comprehensive Review - Planning \(simcoe.ca\)](https://www.simcoe.ca/municipal-comprehensive-review-planning)) providing further details on the study content and process. **Figure 1** provides an infographic outline the County MCR process:

**Figure 1 – MCR Process**



The Provincial Growth Plan requires that the County plan for 555,000 residents and 198,000 jobs to be accommodated within the 2051 timeframe. The County, through its MCR study, includes a Lands Needs Assessment (LNA) that will assess the County settlement areas and determine how much, if any, additional settlement lands are required to achieve the provincial forecast. Included in the County process will be the allocation of population and employment growth to lower tier municipalities. The County’s LNA process will be guided by the Provincial ‘Land Needs Assessment Methodology for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)’ and will determine the land needs for Community Areas and Employment Areas. Community Areas include lands for housing, population related jobs, most office jobs and some employment land employment jobs. Employment Areas are where most employment land employment jobs are to be accommodated including industrial type buildings as well as some office jobs and population related jobs, particularly those servicing the employment areas. The results of the County LNA will be a total quantum of land needed (or excess lands) at the County level and its allocation of that land need to the individual lower-tier municipalities.

Each lower-tier municipality that has been allocated growth will be required to complete a planning analysis to decide, within a set of policy guidelines in keeping with the PPS, Growth Plan and County Official Plan, where it may consider Settlement Area Boundary Expansions to best accommodate the forecast and allocated growth.

County Council received an information report at its August 10<sup>th</sup> meeting with respect to the requests for Settlement Area Boundary Expansions received to date. No decisions were expected of County Council as the report did not relate to the Lands Needs Assessment work, and as such the report was received for information. The portion of the County report identifying the SABE requests is provided as Appendix 1 to this report.

The County has also advised that the first draft of the LNA work has been reported to local municipal planners on August 31<sup>st</sup> to get the initial review and feedback. Final outcomes of the LNA work are to be released for public consultation in October 2021.

## 1.2 What we have said so far

So far in the Official Plan Review, two Discussion Papers have been released.

Discussion Paper #1 provided a board review of the planning landscape guiding the preparation of the new Official Plan including addressing the full range of matters around 'Growing Essa'. Section 4 of the Discussion Paper reviewed the Growth Management, Housing, and Employment and Infrastructure strategies through the lens of the PPS, Growth Plan, County Official Plan and Essa Official Plan. The 2013 Growth Strategy was also reviewed and identified the conclusion that settlement area boundary expansions were not required at the time and not recommended until 2023. In light of this analysis, it was concluded that no Settlement Area Boundary Expansions be considered outside the County MCR. Direction #3 of Discussion Paper #1, 'Further refine the settlement area hierarchy and growth management strategy for the new Official Plan', included the following policy directions:

- Create and define a detailed settlement area hierarchy and provide a comprehensive policy framework for the planned function of each settlement in accordance with the Ainley 2013 Growth Strategy, updated as appropriate.
- Update the policies for settlement areas to ensure consistency with the PPS, and conformity with the Growth Plan and County Official Plan.
- Consider establishing a policy framework for the review and update of the growth strategy based on the upcoming County MCR.

Discussion Paper #2 provided a review of the submissions made by the community to Discussion Paper #1 and confirmed the policy directions for the new Official Plan. In response to a number of requests for expansions to settlement area boundary's and consistent with the direction regarding the consideration of re-designation requests, Discussion Paper #2 confirmed the recommendation that no Settlement Area Boundary Expansions are proposed and would only be considered in concert with the County MCR.

## 1.3 Integrating the MCR and the OPR

Integrating the MCR and the Official Plan Review will require significant cooperation and coordination between the County and Township. In addition, the County's LNA will need to be provided to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for review and comment before the Assessment is finalized.

As much of the County MCR and its LNA is still uncertain, both in terms of timing and outcomes, it is difficult to provide a firm sense of the timing for the Township's process for determining how to accommodate the land needs for growth to 2051. However, in the following Sections the process

the Township intends to follow is described with the timing being fully dependent on the County MCR/LNA process.

# 2.0 Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

As noted above, the Growth Plan provides the obligations on the County to undertake the MCR and as part of that to complete the LNA including determining the need and location for expansions to settlement area boundary's across the entire County.

## 2.1 County Approach

The MCR and LNA must be undertaken by the County in accordance with the GP and approved guidance document and determine a range of matters including, 1) establish a hierarchy of settlement areas and areas within settlement areas, 2) the quantum of lands needed (or excess lands) for Community Areas and Employment Areas to accommodate growth to 2051, 3) allocation of growth and land needs to lower-tier municipalities if required, and 4) where the need for a settlement area boundary expansion has been established the feasibility of the proposed expansion will be identified through a comprehensive application of the full extent of Growth Plan policies and specifically:

- a) there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;
- b) the infrastructure and public service facilities needed would be financially viable over the full life cycle of these assets;
- c) the proposed expansion would be informed by applicable water and wastewater master plans or equivalent and stormwater master plans or equivalent, as appropriate;
- d) the proposed expansion, including the associated water, wastewater and stormwater servicing, would be planned and demonstrated to avoid, or if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate any potential negative impacts on watershed conditions and the water resource system, including the quality and quantity of water;
- e) key hydrologic areas and the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan should be avoided where possible;
- f) prime agricultural areas should be avoided where possible. To support the Agricultural System, alternative locations across the upper-or single-tier municipality will be evaluated,

prioritized and determined based on avoiding, minimizing and mitigating the impact on the Agricultural System and in accordance with a range of criteria;

- h) any adverse impacts on the agri-food network, including agricultural operations, from expanding settlement areas would be avoided, or if avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated as determined through an agricultural impact assessment;
- j) the proposed expansion would meet all requirements of the all provincial Plans, where applicable.

The County MCR has proposed that Step 4 of the process, where required, would be delegated to each of the lower-tier municipalities that have growth allocated to them.

## 2.2 Township Approach

Assuming that the County allocates growth to the Township for 2051, Essa will be required to undertake the comprehensive planning review as required by Section 2.2.8.3 of the Growth Plan and as described above. In order to ensure a SABE process that is open, defensible and traceable and is based on a foundation of sound planning technical review and analysis, the Township of Essa will undertake a three stage public SABE process.

Stage	Description
Stage 1	Open call for requests for boundary expansions
Stage 2	Analysis of where boundary expansions should be considered in accordance with the approach determined by the County Municipal Comprehensive Review process and in accordance with the County's settlement area hierarchy. This will include the identification of options for the consideration of Council and recommendation on a preferred option.
Stage 3	Council decision on a preferred option and direction to incorporate the SABE into the New Essa Official Plan process.

The open call for boundary expansion requests will ensure an open and transparent process. As noted in Appendix 1 to this report, some requests have been submitted directly to the Township, others previously submitted to the County, and other recently submitted as part of the public meeting at the commencement of the MCR process. By calling for requests and specifying the details to be provided with the requests, the Township can better ensure that each request is tested equally and fairly against the evaluation criteria established by the Province, County and Township. Further details on Stage 1 of the SABE process are outlined below.

Further details on the technical analysis required by Stage 2 will be described by the County as part of the MCR process and refined and expanded, as necessary, by the Township.

# 3.0 NEXT STEPS

Subject to Council acknowledgment and concurrence and confirmation from the County that additional Community Area and Employment Area land needs are allocated to Essa, the next steps in the SABE process are described below.

## 3.1 Call for Expansion Requests

New and/or amended requests for Settlement Area boundary expansions will be requested and accepted as part of a 60 day submission window. Requests will be required to provide information and data addressing the evaluation criteria established by the Growth Plan, County MCR, and Township. The requests will be mapped and enumerated and will be considered in Stage 2 of the SABE review.

## 3.2 Continued Public Consultation

As the SABE process moves forward, there will be multiple additional opportunities for public and stakeholder participation and the submission of input and comments including the release of the Options Report, public open house, and of course the formal public meeting required under the *Planning Act* with respect to the Official Plan Review.

## 3.3 Stay Involved!

Stay informed, stay involved and stay engaged! Your ideas, comments and suggestions will help inform the preparation of the new Official Plan for the Township of Essa.

Comments can be submitted in writing to the Township's Official Plan email account at [officialplan@essatownship.on.ca](mailto:officialplan@essatownship.on.ca) or feel free to drop off hard copies of your responses to the Planning Department at the Township of Essa to the attention of Aimee Powell, Manager of Planning and Development.

Please check the Township's Official Plan Review webpage, on the Township's website, for further details on the status of the project, release of documents for review, and upcoming consultation and engagement events.

The link to the website is: [www.essatownship.on.ca/government/official-plan-review](http://www.essatownship.on.ca/government/official-plan-review)