



Corporation of the Township of Brock

Staff Report to the Mayor and Members of Council

From: Robin Prentice, MCIP, RPP

Position: Director of Development Services

Title / Subject: Envision Durham – Beaverton Commons Employment Conversion Request

Date of Report: March 31, 2023

Date of Meeting: April 11, 2023

Report No: 2023-DS-007

1.0 Issue / Origin

On March 27, 2023, in response to a presentation on behalf of Beaverton Commons, Council directed staff to prepare a report on options for a partial conversion of the employment lands abutting the Beaver River, to accommodate a long term care facility, retirement home and medical building.

2.0 Background

2.1 Beaverton Commons Location / Context

Location:	Part of Lot 11, Concession 5, Beaver Avenue, Beaverton
Official Plan Designation:	Beaverton Urban Area – Employment Area, Open Space and Mixed Use Corridor
Zoning:	Rural Buffer (RB)
Present Use:	Vacant, agricultural, environmental
Adjacent Uses:	Commercial, environmental, vacant

A location map outlining the subject lands and the associated land use designations in the Official Plan can be found in Attachment 1.

2.2 Beaverton Commons Request / Proposal

The original concept proposed a mixed-use community with a mix of employment uses, residential units, a medical centre and a seniors' residential building (Attachment 2).

The revised concept proposes an age-in-place community with a long-term care facility, retirement home/senior's apartments, a commercial/recreational building and residential bungalows geared towards seniors (Attachment 3). The revised concept includes some population-related jobs in the long term care facility, retirement home and commercial/recreational building/medical office, but does not include any other employment uses.

The purpose of the employment conversion request is to allow residential/institutional uses on the subject lands. The landowner has requested the Township consider two options to support this request:

- a) Support a conversion of the subject lands from Employment Area to Community Area in the Region's Official Plan; or
- b) Support a policy in the Region's Official Plan that would permit the proposed uses (i.e. residential, long term care facility, retirement home) within this Employment Area.

2.3 Envision Durham Process

In May 2018, Durham Region initiated Envision Durham, representing a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) of the Region's Official Plan, where it is intended that the existing plan is to be revoked and replaced with a new Regional Official Plan (ROP).

Evaluating the conversion of Employment Area lands was a key step in the Region's land needs assessment to determine where and how much Employment Area lands may be re-designated to Community Area to permit non-employment uses (e.g. residential, and population-related employment such as retail, service-commercial and institutional uses). The Region is required to designate sufficient lands to accommodate the Growth Plan's forecasts for employment and population growth.

A summary of the Employment Conversion request for the subject lands and key findings and recommendations from the reports are provided in the timeline below.

- January 2018: Clark Consulting submitted an Employment Area Conversion Request for the subject lands on behalf of the landowner.
- June 2020: Regional Council endorsed Employment Area Conversion Criteria and established the submission process for considering requests for Employment Area conversions. The Regional criteria (outlined in Attachment 4) builds on the conversion tests provided in the Growth Plan.
- June-September 2020: The Region had a 90-day submission window for interested parties to submit an Employment Area conversion request for the Region's consideration as part of the MCR. The Region received 42 Employment Area conversion requests. 6 employment area conversion requests were received within the Township of Brock (representing approximately 78 hectares of land or 38% of the designated employment lands in the Township).

- August 2020: Clark Consulting submitted a revised conversion request submission to outline a mixed-use development on the subject lands.
- January 2021: Township staff provided recommendations on the Employment Area conversion requests received within the Township. Township Council supported staff's recommendations and did not support a conversion of the Employment Area designation on the Beaverton Commons lands (see Report 2021-CO-02).
- July-October 2021: The Region released 4 technical reports as part of the Growth Management Study to inform the Land Needs Assessment, including an Employment Strategy and Community Area Urban Land Needs Analysis.
- December 2021: Regional Planning staff provided recommendations on the Employment Area conversion requests received through the Envision Durham process and did not support the conversion proposed for the Beaverton Commons lands – identified as request CNR-23 (see Report [#2021-P-25](#)). Regional Council supported this recommendation and did not support the conversion.
- March/April 2022: Weston Consulting provided correspondence requesting reconsideration of the conversion request on behalf of the landowner.
- May 2022: Regional staff provided recommendations on the preferred Land Need Scenarios.
- November 2022: The Region released an information report and draft mapping showing the extent and location of draft Settlement Area Boundary Expansions ([Report #2022-INFO-91](#)), along with the [Municipal Growth Allocations and Land Needs Report](#). Regional staff addressed the conversion request again and continue to not recommend conversion of these lands, on the basis that the Township is forecasted to have a shortage of Employment Area lands and a surplus of Community Area land, which could accommodate a retirement community as proposed.
- February 2023: The Region released the [draft Regional Official Plan](#) for review and comment. The Draft ROP maintains the Employment Area designation on these lands.

The purpose of this Report is to provide information on the Employment Area conversion request for the Beaverton Commons lands within the Township of Brock that was submitted to the Region of Durham for consideration through the Envision Durham process and to evaluate the conversion request.

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Planning Policy Analysis

3.1.1 Planning Act

The Planning Act defines an area of employment as “an area of land designated in an official plan for clusters of business and economic uses including, without limitation, the uses listed in subsection (5) or as otherwise prescribed by regulation.”

The uses outlined in subsection (5) include:

- a) manufacturing uses;
- b) warehousing uses;
- c) office uses;
- d) retail uses that are associated with uses mentioned in clauses (a) to (c); and
- e) facilities that are ancillary to uses mentioned in clauses (a) to (d).

The Planning Act restricts appeals in respect of amendments that propose to remove any land from an area of employment, even if other land is proposed to be added.

3.1.2 Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. All land use decisions of Council must be consistent with the PPS. The PPS requires the Region and Township to plan, protect, and preserve Employment Areas for current and future uses.

Section 1.3.2.4 of the PPS permits the conversion of lands within Employment Areas to non-employment uses through a comprehensive review, only where it has been demonstrated that the land is not required for employment purposes over the long term and that there is a need for the conversion. The following policies would also apply:

- a. protecting and preserving Employment Areas for current and future uses;
- b. Employment Areas planned for industrial and manufacturing uses shall provide for separation or mitigation from sensitive land uses to maintain the long-term operational and economic viability of the planned uses and function of these areas;
- c. within Employment Areas planned for industrial or manufacturing uses, planning authorities shall prohibit residential uses and prohibit or limit other sensitive land uses that are not ancillary to the primary employment uses to maintain land use compatibility. Employment areas planned for industrial or manufacturing uses should include an appropriate transition to adjacent non-employment areas;
- d. protecting Employment Areas in proximity to major goods movement facilities and corridors for employment uses that require those locations; and
- e. providing the opportunity to plan for (but not designate lands) beyond 25 years for the long-term protection of employment lands.

3.1.3 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019)

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) builds upon the policies established in the PPS. The Growth Plan requires the Region to designate Employment Areas in the ROP and protect them for appropriate employment uses over the long term. The Growth Plan provides employment forecasts that the Region and Township must plan for to ensure the availability of sufficient land, in appropriate locations, for a variety of employment to accommodate forecasted employment growth. The Growth Plan policies address a range of employment land matters including protection of employment lands.

The Growth Plan also includes a requirement that appropriate buffering between Employment Areas and non-employment uses (including sensitive uses) be utilized. The development of sensitive uses, major retail uses and/or major office uses must also avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts on industrial, manufacturing and other uses that are vulnerable to encroachment.

Section 2.2.5.7 requires municipalities to plan for Employment Areas within settlement areas by:

- a. prohibiting residential uses and prohibiting or limiting other sensitive land uses that are not ancillary to the primary employment use;

- b. prohibiting major retail uses or establishing a size or scale threshold for any major retail uses that are permitted and prohibiting any major retail uses that would exceed that threshold; and
- c. providing an appropriate interface between Employment Areas and adjacent non-employment areas to maintain land use compatibility.

The Growth Plan requires the assessment of employment land conversion requests to occur through the Region's MCR and Employment Areas must be designated within the ROP. Section 2.2.5.9 notes that the conversion of lands within employment areas to non-employment uses may only be permitted through an MCR where it is demonstrated that:

- a. there is a need for the conversion;
- b. the lands are not required over the horizon of this Plan for the employment purposes for which they are designated;
- c. the municipality will maintain sufficient employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth;
- d. the proposed uses would not adversely affect the overall viability of the Employment Area or the achievement of the minimum intensification and density targets of the Growth Plan; and
- e. there are existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities to accommodate the proposed uses.

3.1.4 Greenbelt Plan (2017)

The Greenbelt Plan identifies where urbanization should occur in order to provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological features and functions that occur in the rural landscape. The subject lands are located within the Beaverton Settlement Area, which is identified as a Town/Village in the Greenbelt Plan. Towns/Villages are the focus of development and related economic and social activity and guided by the policies in the Growth Plan.

3.1.5 Region of Durham Official Plan

The Region of Durham has released the new Draft Regional Official Plan (ROP) for public review and comment. This section includes a review of the existing and proposed new ROP. Both the existing and proposed Draft ROP designate the subject lands as "Employment Area". The ROP reflects Provincial Policy requirements by designating Employment Areas to protect these lands for appropriate employment uses through associated policies.

By 2051, Durham Region is forecast to grow to 1.3 million people and 460,000 jobs. This represents an increase of approximately 577,000 residents and 218,400 jobs between 2021 and 2051. The Township of Brock is forecast to grow to 20,900 people and 7,400 jobs by 2051.

The Region's Growth Management Study has identified that Brock has sufficient land within the existing Urban Area Boundary to accommodate population related growth to 2051 (i.e. residential and population-related jobs) but has identified a need for a settlement area boundary expansion to accommodate employment growth because there are not enough lands designated Employment Area. An expansion of 17 ha (42 acres) has been proposed for Employment Area within Beaverton and Sunderland (see Attachment 5).

Section 8C.2.16 of the current ROP and proposed policy 5.5.10 in the Draft ROP (dated February 2023) only permit the consideration of an Employment Area conversion as part of a MCR pursuant to the provisions of the Growth Plan.

The Region's consultant, Watson and Associates, provided principles and criteria for evaluating requests for Employment Area conversion. In addition, Watson and Associates identified several potential negative impacts if careful evaluation is not applied to requests for Employment Area conversion, including:

- reduced employment opportunities and imbalances between population and employment (jobs);
- eroding the Region's employment land supply and leading to further conversion pressure through the encroachment of non-employment uses within, or adjacent to, Employment Areas; and
- fragmenting existing Employment Areas and further undermining their ability to function.

Employment Areas are to be planned as locations for primary employment generating uses such as manufacturing, assembly, processing, generation, freight and transportation, warehousing, storage, major facilities and similar uses that require access to highway facilities and/or separation from sensitive land uses. Employment Areas represent preferred locations for knowledge-based industries including research and development facilities and offices. Hotels, subject to land use compatibility, service industries, and limited supportive uses including associated retail and ancillary facilities may also be permitted.

The Draft ROP includes a section on land use compatibility and sensitive land uses within Employment Areas, with policies to protect Employment Areas from encroachment by non-employment uses and sensitive land uses.

Both the existing and new ROP prohibit residential uses, nursing and retirement homes, as well as elementary and secondary schools within Employment Areas. Such uses are considered sensitive land uses that are not compatible with employment uses and industries that are permitted within Employment Areas.

3.1.6 Township of Brock Official Plan (2006)

The Township of Brock Official Plan (OP) designates the subject lands as Employment Area, with Open Space along the Beaver River. The remainder of the property is located outside of the Urban Area Boundary and is designated Major Open Space Area.

Retaining Employment Area lands over the long-term is a priority for the Township. One of the goals of the OP is the Township's commitment to the long term development of an adequate supply of employment lands that offer a range of suitable sites for future industrial and business uses. The objective of the Employment Area designation is to identify and designate lands, having a high degree of exposure and good access to major transportation routes, for employment purposes.

Balanced growth is important. One of the strategic directions of the OP is that strong, complete communities will be created that have a balance between the residential, commercial and employment sectors.

The Township's OP outlines criteria that should be considered as part of a conversion request (in Policy 5.6.3.8):

- a. there is a need for the conversion;
- b. the Township will meet the employment forecasts allocated by the Regional Official Plan;
- c. the conversion will not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area, and the achievement of intensification targets and density targets;
- d. there is existing or planned infrastructure to accommodate the proposed conversion;
- e. the lands are not required over the long term for employment purposes for which they are designated; or,
- f. alternatively, employment lands to be converted shall be replaced through the designation of more suitably located lands for the development of employment uses; and,
- g. cross-jurisdictional issues have been considered.

To address land use compatibility between Employment Areas and Community Areas, policy 5.6.3.7 requires adequate buffers be provided to separate employment uses from residential areas in order to reduce conflicts. Buffers may include such features as setbacks, berms, walls, fences and landscape strips.

3.2 Consideration of an Employment Area Conversion Request

The PPS, Growth Plan, ROP and Township OP define and specify criteria to be considered when reviewing Employment Area conversion requests. An employment area conversion is considered the conversion of lands within designated Employment Areas to non-employment uses, either through mapping or policy by changing the designation from Employment Area to Community Area at the Regional level, or the introduction of a policy that would permit a non-employment use.

The purpose of the Beaverton Commons employment conversion request is to allow non-employment uses on the subject lands. Here are the potential options for the Township's consideration:

1. Support a conversion of the subject lands from Employment Area to Community Area in the ROP for the entire subject area or a portion of it.
2. Maintain the Employment Area designation but request the Region include a policy in the ROP that would permit a long term care facility and retirement home in this area.
3. Maintain the Employment Area designation and offer to work with the landowner to find a more appropriate location in the Community Area for the proposed age-in-place concept.

3.3 Evaluating the Beaverton Commons Employment Area Conversion Request

The guiding principles for consideration of a conversion request include:

- Protecting employment lands over the long-term;
- Protecting employment lands along Provincial highways;
- Providing a variety of employment lands to improve market supply;
- Ensuring compatibility with and appropriate transition to nearby land uses; and
- Minimizing and/or avoiding parcels that may fragment or compromise the planned function of the larger employment area.

Lands designated as Employment Area should be protected and reserved for uses that:

- a. require access to transportation infrastructure (including goods movement infrastructure),
- b. require separation from sensitive lands uses (i.e. residential uses), and/or
- c. benefit from locating within proximity to similar uses.

Employment Area conversions can have substantial and long-term impacts on a municipality which may include the encroachment of sensitive land uses. This may result in employment uses adversely affecting sensitive land uses, a reduction in the viability of future employment uses, and lead to additional conversions within the Employment Area. Once converted, it is unlikely the lands will ever return to an employment use. Accordingly, requests for Employment Area conversion must be carefully evaluated.

The employment conversion request for the Beaverton Commons property has been evaluated against Provincial, Regional and local employment conversion criteria, as outlined in Attachment 4.

Employment Forecasts and Land Use Designations

Provincial and Regional policy direct that Employment Areas should be protected through designation in Official Plans, and primarily set aside for manufacturing, warehousing and industrial uses to accommodate forecasted employment growth.

In accordance with the methodology issued by the Province, land needs are to be assessed across 2 different areas, including Community Areas and Employment Areas:

- Community Areas: areas for housing and population-related jobs (i.e. retail, schools, service-related), office jobs, and some employment land employment jobs.
- Employment Areas: areas for employment land employment jobs (i.e. employment in industrial type buildings), as well as some office jobs and some population-related jobs, particularly those providing services to the employment area.

As noted, the Region's growth management work has identified sufficient land is available for Community Area purposes, but the Township does not have enough Employment Area land. A sufficient amount of land needs to be protected for the long term for industrial and other appropriate uses intended for Employment Areas, to ensure a sustained level of future employment opportunities, contributing towards a live-work balance for a complete community.

There are 2 main types of employment classes within urban areas:

- a. employment area: employment within designated Employment Areas (ie. industrial, manufacturing, office)
- b. population-related: employment serving the local population within Community Areas, such as retail, service uses, institutional and community services.

Staff recognize that the landowner has provided a proposed land use plan to demonstrate how the lands could be used to support an age-in-place concept. The submission proposes to remove the opportunity for employment area jobs, while providing residential uses and some uses that would provide population-related jobs (i.e. long term care facility). While aspects of the potential conversion could result in some job creation, it would reduce the potential for

employment area jobs and once the lands are converted, it would be difficult to control the amount of population-related uses that could be realized.

The Township needs to protect and provide lands for both employment area jobs, as well as population-related jobs. There are currently vacant and under-utilized lands designated for residential, institutional and commercial purposes within the Community Area in the Beaverton Urban Area that would be able to support population-related job opportunities (see Attachment 6). The existing Community Area designation provides opportunities to create an age-in-place development as proposed in the proponent's submission. The Employment Area designation is intended to provide an opportunity for more industrial and employment area job opportunities.

The Beaver Avenue Employment Area is able to offer a range of land parcel sizes, including large sized land parcels, in close proximity to Hwy 12, providing opportunities for land intensive employment uses. The number of residents leaving the community to work will continue to increase as the community grows without sufficient Employment Areas available to provide local job opportunities.

It is important to note that the landowner's plan continues to evolve and there is no guarantee that the Township would achieve the level of population-related employment that is being proposed. Should the lands be re-designated as Community Area at the Regional level, the Township would then have to update the Township's OP as part of the Township's subsequent OP Review process. The Township could review and propose land uses through the Township's OP Review process, but these designations and associated policies may be appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) by the landowner. Once the lands are converted to Community Area at the Regional level, there's no requirement for the landowner to provide any population-related employment in this area.

Maintaining employment lands within Beaverton will assist the Township in building complete communities and diversifying the tax base, which will support the Township's economic sustainability. A diversified tax base is more economically stable, generates more tax revenues and can keep taxes lower for residents. Industries or businesses that are found within Employment Areas typically have a higher tax rate than residential and commercial uses, thus keeping taxes lower for residents.

Servicing

Support for this request is considered premature on the basis that the lands are part of an Employment Area that has not been serviced yet and therefore have not been given an opportunity to be developed to its full potential as an Employment Area. The Beaver Avenue Employment Area offers opportunities to accommodate new employment uses which would provide local jobs in working towards achieving the Township's employment forecasts and creating a complete community in which people can live and work.

The Region of Durham announced an initiative that will focus on pre-servicing employment lands, which includes the Beaver Avenue Employment Area within Beaverton (see Report 2020-COW-23). The Region is looking to complete the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the required infrastructure, which is a key step towards servicing the Employment Area.

Once the EA is complete, detailed design and construction of the required infrastructure would still need to take place. The pre-servicing initiative and EA work will inform future Regional

business plans and budgets and help prioritize servicing infrastructure projects at the Regional level with respect to enhancing the competitive position of Employment Areas within the Region.

Prioritizing Regional budget to include the design and construction of required infrastructure is dependent on the potential to facilitate employment growth and development. There would be a stronger case to prioritize the Beaver Avenue Employment Area through the Regional budget and business plan process if the subject lands remain as Employment Area and are not converted to Community Area or opened up to non-employment uses. The size of the conversion and any other potential conversions could impact the budget priority and timing of the required infrastructure.

Community Planning and Land Use Compatibility

Local municipalities need to examine the impacts of conversions on the overall community planning regime. The Township should only support conversions that are strategically beneficial to the Township and its current and future residents and businesses.

While a proposed long term care facility, retirement home and medical office uses would be beneficial and a welcome addition to the community, this is not the right location for those types of uses. These types of uses are directed to the Community Area, where they can be connected to the rest of the community and other amenities that are needed to support such uses.

Piecemeal development can risk creating residential areas that are isolated from larger community areas, lacking walkability, parks, and other community amenities. It is critical that areas being considered for residential uses be considered in the context of the larger area to support complete community objectives.

The lands subject to this conversion request are disconnected from the existing residential areas, downtown Beaverton and other community and recreational services that exist on the west side of the Beaver River. There is no real boundary proposed as part of the conversion request that would provide an appropriate interface between the proposed residential area and the employment lands to the west that would help to maintain land use compatibility. The Beaver River and existing environmental area bordering this property provides a more appropriate boundary and transition between residential and employment lands.

The proposal for a policy to permit a long term care facility, retirement home and potentially residential uses within this Employment Area would essentially be establishing a conversion through policy. This proposed policy would conflict with Provincial and Regional policies that prohibit sensitive land uses within Employment Areas, such as residential uses, nursing and retirement homes. Sensitive land uses are not compatible with employment uses and industries that are permitted within Employment Areas and would result in land use compatibility issues.

The approval of an Employment Area conversion could contribute to the destabilization of the adjacent employment lands by introducing non-compatible uses and creating expectations that the surrounding area may be converted as part of an MCR. This could result in disinvestment, resulting in the loss of potential businesses.

The overall nature and character of the Employment Area has yet to be fully established, but the uses within this area will tend to be more industrial in nature and incompatible with residential

uses. Conversion of these lands for residential and institutional uses may destabilize the remaining Employment Area.

The Beaver Avenue Employment Area was designated for employment given the proximity to Hwy 12, which is part of the strategic goods movement network identified in the Region's OP. The subject lands are the closest employment lands to Hwy 12 within Beaverton.

The subject lands are part of a larger contiguous employment area, and the introduction of non-employment uses, such as residential uses for retirement living, has the potential to destabilize the employment area and/or negatively impact viability of future surrounding employment uses and adding pressure for future conversions on adjacent parcels. The site is in proximity to Hwy 12, contributing to the Regional and local municipality's economic development potential and supporting goods movement. Converting this site is contrary to Local, Regional and Provincial planning objectives.

The conversion request could have substantial and long-term impacts on the viability of the employment area lands in the Township, which form the backbone of the Township's economic success and potentially impact the Township's community planning process. Preserving these areas for future employment uses is integral to meeting Regional and Township long term employment needs.

Township Options and Recommendations

Staff reviewed the conversion request from a comprehensive planning perspective and have concluded that the proposed conversion (either through designation or policy) does not comply with Provincial, Regional and local planning policy documents.

The conversion request does not satisfy all the employment conversion criteria (see Attachment 4) and should not be supported based on the following:

- The Township is forecasted to have a shortage of Employment Area lands and a surplus of Community Area land, which could accommodate the proposed retirement community.
- This is the closest Employment Area to Hwy 12 in Beaverton, which is the main transportation/goods movement corridor.
- Sensitive land uses are not appropriate within Employment Areas and will cause land use compatibility issues within and for the adjacent Employment Area, which could limit the industries and job opportunities in this area.
- Reducing the amount of Employment Area would reduce opportunities for a live-work balance and diversified tax base within the Township.
- Employment Areas need to be protected over the long-term.
- The proposed conversion would create a residential area that is isolated and not connected to the rest of the Beaverton community. The Beaver River provides an appropriate transition between residential and employment areas.

Staff recommend that the Employment Area designation be maintained and that the Township offer to work with the landowner to find a more appropriate location in the Community Area for the proposed age-in-place concept.

Should Council wish to support the proposed concept and associated conversion request despite staff's recommendation, the option to maintain the Employment Area designation while

requesting a policy to permit additional uses would be preferred as opposed to changing the designation to Community Area. The policy approach would still allow for other employment uses in this area but may result in land use compatibility matters that would need to be addressed through subsequent applications and approvals.

Changing the designation from “Employment Area” to “Community Area” could result in the landowner pursuing residential development opportunities and the owners would be under no obligation to build what they have proposed in the concept plan.

Should Council choose to support the conversion request (for a portion or entire area), staff would like to acknowledge that this decision would not necessarily be tied to, or an endorsement of, a specific concept plan. The Township would reserve the right to review and comment on the detailed plans for the site in accordance with the land use designations that are approved for this site.

Next Steps

After consultation on the draft ROP, a final ROP document will be presented to Regional Council for a decision before the end of June 2023. Once a new ROP is adopted by Regional Council, it will then be sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for final approval, and the Minister of MMAH is the approval authority for the ROP.

The Region of Durham would need to reconsider the conversion request and make a decision as part of the final ROP document that is then submitted to MMAH for a final decision. The Minister of MMAH has the ultimate decision-making authority as to whether this conversion is included in the ROP or not. The Minister’s decision with respect to the proposed conversion can not be appealed, by either the landowner, the Township or the Region.

While the comprehensive ROP cannot be appealed, a site specific policy regarding permitted uses on this property could be subject to a future amendment application and appeal process. Should Township Council, the Region and/or the Minister open the door to the conversion through a site specific policy to address permitted uses on the subject lands, it may also open the door to a future application for an OP amendment to change that policy, which could be appealed.

Once the new ROP is approved by MMAH, the Township of Brock will finalize its own OP review process, to update and bring the Township’s OP into conformity with Provincial and Regional planning documents. Bill 23 also directs that the ROP will transition down to the lower tier municipalities, but timing of this transition is unknown as this point in time. It is also unknown how this transition will impact the Township’s overall OP review process.

Depending on the final outcome, the landowner would still have to go through the normal planning process to have any development approved and timing of development would be dependent on the provision of municipal servicing infrastructure. The Township would need to update the Township’s OP and applications for a Zoning By-law Amendment, Subdivision and Site Plans would be required.

4.0 Related Policies / Procedures

Related policies and procedures have been outlined in Section 3 of this report.

5.0 Financial / Budget Assessment

Employment areas play an important role to the Township's economy. Availability of a wide range of employment land is integral to fiscal health of a community and can directly affect economic development and diversification of the assessment base.

A diversified tax base that is based on residential and employment growth is more economically stable, generates more tax revenues and can keep taxes lower for residents. Industries or businesses that are found within Employment Areas typically have a higher tax rate than residential, institutional and commercial development.

There are potential indirect financial and economic implications which could result from the conversion of employment lands. At this time, it isn't possible to quantify the breadth of financial implications to the Township associated with the potential conversion of employment lands. However, the Township needs to consider the long-term impacts of not realizing potential non-residential property taxation revenues should the current lands not be developed for employment/industrial uses, which may impact the Township's financial sustainability.

6.0 Climate Change Impacts

Long-term, comprehensive planning being done as part of the Envision Durham process helps to address climate change impacts. Planning compact urban areas supports the development of healthy and complete, sustainable communities, while efficiently using land and resources. Balancing jobs and housing reduces automobile dependency and the need for long distance commuting.

7.0 Communications

The Region has undertaken a comprehensive community consultation program as part of the Envision Durham process, which includes the use of digital engagement tools, social media, and the holding of community events. The Region has a web page dedicated to the [Envision Durham project](#), which is used to assist with public engagement. No further public engagement is required on the Township's behalf at this time.

8.0 Conclusion

This Report provides information on the Beaverton Commons Employment Area conversion request that was submitted for consideration through the Region's Envision Durham process. Township staff have concluded that the Employment Area conversion request does not satisfy Provincial, Regional and local requirements for a conversion at the Regional level and recommend maintaining the Employment Area designation on this property.

9.0 Recommendation

That staff report 2023-DS-007, regarding Envision Durham – Beaverton Commons Employment Conversion Request, be received;

That the request for an employment conversion (either for a portion or the entire subject area) to allow for sensitive land uses in this area not be supported and that the Employment Area designation be maintained.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Location Map of Subject Lands with Official Plan Designations

Attachment 2 – Original Proposed Concept

Attachment 3 – Revised Proposed Concept

Attachment 4 – Employment Conversion Request Evaluation

Attachment 5 – Proposed Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

Attachment 6 – Township OP Map 1A – Beaverton Urban Area land use designations