

Report To:	Regional Chair and Members of Regional Council
From:	Bob Gray, Commissioner, Legislative and Planning Services and Corporate Counsel
Date:	March 24, 2021
Report No:	LPS29-21
Re:	Provincial Consultation on Growing the Size of the Greenbelt

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT Regional Council endorse Report No. LPS29-21 re: “Provincial Consultation on Growing the Size of the Greenbelt” as the basis to prepare a submission by the Province’s April 19, 2021 Environmental Registry deadline.
2. THAT the Regional Clerk forward a copy of Report No. LPS29-21 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, the Town of Oakville, Conservation Halton, Credit Valley Conservation Authority, the Grand River Conservation Authority, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and Halton’s Members of Provincial Parliament for their information.

REPORT

Executive Summary

- On February 17, 2021, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing posted a proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO Number 019-3136) entitled “Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt” (Attachment #1).
- The proposal identifies principles, priorities and questions for public consultation about growing the size and further enhancing the quality of the Greenbelt area, with a priority of:
 - A study area of lands focused on the Paris Galt Moraine, which is home to critical groundwater resources; and
 - Ideas for adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys
- The proposal also seeks feedback on other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt where expansion would support a strong physical or functional connection to the

Greenbelt natural heritage, water resource or agricultural systems, consistent with Greenbelt Plan objectives and other Provincial priorities.

- The proposal is open for a 61-day public consultation period ending on April 19th, 2021, which is prior to Regional Council's next meeting on April 21, 2021.
- In order to meet the Province's commenting deadline, staff recommend that Regional Council endorse this report as a basis for staff to prepare a more detailed submission to the Province in response to the proposal.

Background

The Greenbelt area, which includes the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Protected Countryside, protects agricultural and natural heritage areas from urbanization pressures over the long-term. Regional Council has supported enhancing the size of the Greenbelt area over the last several years.

In its Strategic Action Plan, 2015-2018, Regional Council outlined several actions to protect and enhance the Region's natural environment including an action to, *"Advocate to the province for a policy framework that attains the long-term preservation of the Region's natural environment and agricultural areas by growing the Greenbelt in Halton particularly in the urban context."*

In December 2017, the Province released a public consultation document "Protecting Water for Future Generations: Growing the Greenbelt in the Outer Ring". As described in LPS20-18, this consultation document identified locations with high concentrations of important water resources in the outer ring municipalities of the Greater Golden Horseshoe that are under pressure from current or forecasted development.

As Halton Region is located outside the outer ring, no Halton lands were included in the 2017 study area. However, at Regional Council's February 14, 2018 meeting, Council endorsed a motion associated with Report No. LPS20-18 that recommended in part:

"THAT the province be strongly urged to extend the study area for Greenbelt expansion to include the white belt lands within the inner ring, lands that are the most immediately vulnerable to development in the province; and

THAT that the province expeditiously grow the Greenbelt by incorporating appropriate white belt lands within the inner ring to protect our limited freshwater and natural heritage features."

At the March 27, 2019 Regional Council Meeting, Regional Council unanimously passed a notice of motion to support and endorse the passage of Bill 71, the *Paris Galt Moraine Conservation Act, 2019*. The Council resolution focused on the protection of hydrological resources noting that the moraine is a critical primary groundwater recharge area and

that municipalities within the Grand River watershed are dependent on groundwater as the source of municipal drinking water.

In July 2019, Regional Council continued to express support for protecting white belt lands from urbanization through its Strategic Business Plan (2019-2022) which included an objective to protect agricultural areas as well as an action to, “*Support value-added uses on farms and the introduction of a permanent agricultural preserve*”.

Discussion

The current “Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt” proposal outlines Greenbelt expansion principles and provincial priorities to assist the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to determine how and where expansion of the Greenbelt area may be considered. The proposal identifies two initial focus areas to grow the size and enhance the quality of the Greenbelt: a study area for the Paris Galt Moraine groundwater resources feature and ideas for adding and expanding Urban River Valleys (Attachment #1). The proposal also includes a number of discussion questions to guide public feedback on ways to grow the Greenbelt. Subject to Council endorsement, staff have provided initial recommendations which will form the basis of a Regional submission on the proposal to be provided to the Province by the April 19, 2021 commenting deadline. (Attachments #2-3).

In accordance with Council’s Strategic Business Plan (2019-2022), potential expansions to the Greenbelt area could provide a foundation for enhanced protection of Halton’s agricultural land base and a mechanism to introduce a permanent agricultural preserve.

The 61-day commenting period has precluded a joint Halton Area Planning Partnership submission, however Regional staff have consulted with our Local Municipal and Conservation Authority partners to consider alignment of responses to the proposal. The Region’s final submission to the Province will also incorporate forthcoming feedback from Halton’s Agricultural Advisory Committee and Natural Heritage Advisory Committee who have been consulted on the proposal.

Study Area for the Paris Galt Moraine

The Paris Galt Moraine is an important groundwater feature that extends roughly from Brantford in the southwest, through north Milton and Halton Hills, to Caledon in the northeast (Attachment #1). The proposal’s broad study area for the Paris Galt Moraine consists of rolling, hilly terrain and forms the headwaters for many rivers and streams flowing off of it and through Halton Region, like the Credit River.

The Paris Galt Moraine also helps to protect and recharge the groundwater aquifers that provide for a broad range of needs, including drinking water supply for many rural residents as well as urban residents of Milton and Halton Hills, and sustains local ecosystems, economic growth and management.

Given the critical hydrological and ecological functions of the Paris Galt Moraine, Halton Region strongly supports the study of this important ground water feature for permanent protection under the Greenbelt Plan.

Urban River Valleys

The Urban River Valley designation in the Greenbelt Plan applies to lands in river valleys within an urban context, connecting the Greenbelt area to the Great Lakes and inland lakes. Five of the Greenbelt's existing 21 Urban River Valleys run through Halton Region to Lake Ontario (Attachment #1). The policies apply only to publicly owned lands within this designation and are generally lands designated in municipal official plans as parks, open space, recreation, conservation and/or environmental protection. In Halton Region, these policies apply to publicly owned lands in urban areas along Grindstone Creek, Bronte Creek, Fourteen Mile Creek, Sixteen Mile Creek, and the Credit River.

Fourteen Mile Creek is designated as an Urban River Valley in North Oakville however the designation currently terminates at the North Service Road and does not connect to Lake Ontario (Attachment #1). Regional staff recommend that the Province consider studying the remaining portion of the Fourteen Mile Creek Valley extending south to Lake Ontario for inclusion in the Greenbelt Urban River Valley designation.

Regional staff also support the Province's proposal to study increased Urban River Valley designations for public lands beyond 60-metres, where appropriate, consistent with natural heritage designations in local official plans.

Potential Study Areas in Halton Region

In applying the Greenbelt expansion principles and Provincial priorities in the proposal (Attachment #1), Regional staff have identified an additional area of focused study within the Town of Halton Hills as an appropriate candidate area for expanding the Greenbelt in Halton Region.

The lands west of the Growth Plan Natural Heritage System corridor (located between 5th Line and 6th Line) and adjacent to the Greenbelt Protected Countryside, as depicted on the maps in Attachment #2, form a strong physical and functional connection to adjacent Growth Plan and Greenbelt Natural Heritage Systems. This area is particularly appropriate to study for expansion to the Greenbelt because of these strong physical and functional connections to the existing Greenbelt Protected Countryside and Greenbelt Natural Heritage System. Key natural heritage and hydrological features and areas in this area form north-south corridors that extend from the Provincial Natural Heritage Systems and provide wildlife movement and seed dispersal across the Middle Sixteen Mile Creek sub-watershed up to the Niagara Escarpment. Additionally, this area is bounded by the Growth Plan Natural Heritage System and would therefore require enhanced infrastructure crossings to support potential future urban expansion were it not permanently protected.

This candidate study area is also comprised of prime agricultural lands which connects to the prime agricultural area within and beyond Halton's borders and supports the agricultural system in bringing local food and other goods to local markets. These lands are prime agricultural lands that are predominantly comprised of fertile Class 1-3 soils according to the Canadian Land Inventory. Given that prime agricultural lands are a finite, valuable resource, once these lands are converted to urban development, they are permanently lost. The proposed Greenbelt expansion study area could be an important mechanism to support Regional Council's direction to introduce a permanent agricultural preserve in Halton Region to support the Agricultural System over the long-term.

There may also be opportunities to study minor technical refinements to the Greenbelt area to include adjacent agricultural lands and natural heritage features and areas that functionally connect to the Greenbelt, such as along the northern edge of No. 15 Sideroad east of Sixth Line in the Town of Halton Hills.

For any study areas being considered for inclusion in the Greenbelt area it is important that the Province provide opportunities for extensive consultation with the public.

Conclusion

The mapping and comments contained in this report, and Attachments #2-3, represent initial recommendations on the Province's proposal to grow the size of the Greenbelt and enhance its quality. Should Regional Council endorse this report, staff will generate a submission on the basis of this report as the basis of a Regional submission on the proposal to be provided to the Province by the April 19, 2021 commenting deadline.

FINANCIAL/PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations contained in this report.

Respectfully submitted,



Curt Benson
Director, Planning Services and Chief
Planning Official



Bob Gray
Commissioner, Legislative and Planning
Services and Corporate Counsel

Approved by



Jane MacCaskill
Chief Administrative Officer

If you have any questions on the content of this report,
please contact:

Curt Benson

Tel. # 7181

Attachments: Attachment #1 - ERO Post #019-3136 - Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt
Attachment #2 - Mapping of Recommended Candidate Study Areas
Attachment #3 - Discussion Question Responses for Submission to Province



Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt

ERO (Environmental Registry of Ontario) number	019-3136
Notice type	Policy
Act	Greenbelt Act, 2005
Posted by	Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Notice stage	Proposal
Proposal posted	February 17, 2021
Comment period	February 17, 2021 - April 19, 2021 (61 days) Open
Last updated	February 17, 2021

This consultation closes at 11:59 p.m.

on:

April 19, 2021

Proposal summary

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is seeking feedback on ways to grow the size of the Greenbelt.

Proposal details

The government has been clear that we are protecting the Greenbelt from development for future generations. The Greenbelt is home to much of Ontario's vital environmental, groundwater and agricultural resources. That's why in the government's 2020 Budget, we pledged to expand the size of the Greenbelt.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is seeking feedback on ways to grow the size and further enhance the quality of the Greenbelt, with a priority of:

- i. A study area of lands focussed on the Paris Galt Moraine, which is home to critical groundwater resources
- ii. Ideas for adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys

The maps available for this consultation are for discussion purposes only and do not represent a proposed boundary.

Context

The Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, have worked together for over 15 years to provide a framework for where and how growth should be accommodated in southern Ontario. The Greenbelt Area includes lands covered by the policies of the Greenbelt Plan, as well as the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Collectively, these plans identify where urbanization should not occur. The plans provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological and hydrological features, areas and functions within the Greater Golden Horseshoe and beyond. They work together with A Place to Grow, which provides the overarching strategy for where and how growth can be accommodated in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Established under the *Greenbelt Act, 2005*, the Greenbelt is a broad band of protected land that:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use
- Gives protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health and that form the environmental framework around which major urbanization in south-central Ontario will be organized
- Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses
- Builds resilience to and mitigates climate change
- Allows critical new infrastructure and upgrades to existing infrastructure needed to serve the substantial growth projected for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, to be permitted subject to strong environmental conditions

Principles for Growing the Greenbelt Expansions

1. No consideration of removal requests or land exchanges
 - This proposal is about growing the size and quality of the Greenbelt, and the government will not consider the removal of any lands from the Greenbelt.
2. No consideration of policy changes

- Any potential expansions will be based on existing policies. The province will not reduce existing protections in the Greenbelt.
3. Supports Greenbelt Plan objectives, vision and goals
 - Lands to be considered for addition support the Greenbelt Plan's objectives, vision and goals of providing permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological and hydrological features, areas and functions occurring on this landscape and providing for the inclusion of publicly owned lands in urban river valleys.
 4. Follows Existing Amendment Process
 - The *Greenbelt Act, 2005* sets out the legislated public process that will apply to any proposed Greenbelt Plan amendments. This would include requiring consultation with affected public bodies such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Greenbelt Council, municipalities in the Greenbelt Area, an opportunity for consultation with general public, as well as ensuring any proposed amendment does not reduce the total land area within the Greenbelt Plan. Engaging with Indigenous communities would also occur before any amendments are made.
 5. Connects physically and/or functionally to the current Greenbelt
 - The Greenbelt is meant to be a continuous broad band of permanently protected land. Any expansions shall build upon the systems approach of the Greenbelt Plan and should be directly connected or have a strong functional connection through the Greenbelt's natural heritage, water resource or agricultural systems to not create unconnected islands of Greenbelt land.
 6. Considers impacts on existing provincial priorities
 - As discussed below, expansions to the Greenbelt must consider their effects on other key provincial priorities outlined in the Provincial Policy Statement and A Place to Grow.

Initial Focus Areas

Since its establishment in 2005, there has been much discussion by a broad range of Ontarians on ways to grow the Greenbelt. With this input in mind, the government has some early ideas on where and how to grow the Greenbelt. Feedback is sought on the following areas:

1. **A Study Area of the Paris Galt Moraine (see link to Map 1 in Supporting Materials below)**
 - The Paris Galt Moraine is an important feature that runs roughly from Caledon in the northeast to Brantford in the southwest. Similar to the

Oak Ridges Moraine, it is an area of rolling, hilly terrain that is the headwaters for many rivers and streams flowing off of it. Comprised of sand and gravel deposits, it helps to protect and recharge the groundwater aquifers that provide the basis for a broad range of needs, including drinking water supply for many of the communities, sustaining local ecosystems, and growth and economic management. Moraines allow rain and snowmelt to soak into the ground more rapidly and in much greater amounts than the surrounding, less permeable areas. This process provides a reliable, slowly changing supply of water called baseflow to rivers and streams.

- The map of the Paris Galt Moraine is for discussion purposes only and does not represent a proposed boundary.

2. **Urban River Valleys (see link to Map 2 in Supporting Materials below)**

- The Urban River Valley designation in the Greenbelt Plan applies to lands in river valleys within an urban context, connecting the Greenbelt's protected countryside lands to the Great Lakes and inland lakes (e.g. (for example), Don River, Duffins Creek, Twelve Mile Creek). The policies apply only to publicly owned lands within this designation and are often lands designated in municipal official plans as parks, open space, recreation, conservation and/or environmental protection. The Greenbelt currently includes 21 Urban River Valleys and associated coastal wetlands. There may be opportunities for additional urban river valleys to be added or existing ones to be expanded to include additional publicly owned land. The government is seeking feedback for adding new or expanding existing Urban River Valleys, including:
 - Connections to the Paris Galt Moraine through the Speed and Eramosa Rivers in the urban areas of Guelph and Cambridge
 - Ideas for adding other municipally supported Urban River Valleys and/or additions of publicly owned land to existing Urban River Valleys (e.g. (for example), where appropriate increasing the 60-m offset from the water's edge to include more public valley lands)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1:

- **What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of the Study Area of the Paris Galt Moraine?**

Question 2:

- **What are the considerations in moving from a Study Area to a more defined boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine?**

Question 3:

- **What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys?**

Question 4:

- **Do you have suggestions for other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt?**

Other Provincial Priorities

In deciding on where and how to possibly grow the Greenbelt, we must also consider other key provincial priorities that could be impacted. These key provincial priorities include:

Growth Management – Overall, the Greenbelt Plan broadly identifies where urbanization should not occur and A Place to Grow directs the majority of growth to fully serviced settlement areas. Currently, municipalities are working towards updating their official plans by 2022 to conform with the revised growth forecasts in Schedule 3 of A Place to Grow. Therefore, Greenbelt expansion needs to be considered in the context of these growth management exercises by municipalities.

Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems – The Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow are aligned with and build on the Provincial Policy Statement to provide policy protection for natural heritage and water resource systems, features and areas, including habitat for endangered and threatened species. Both the Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow contain policies supporting and protecting a Natural Heritage System that is made up of these natural features and areas along with the linkages that connect them together. Similarly, policies in these plans protect water resource systems on a watershed basis, with the Greenbelt incorporating significant headwaters, river corridors, wetlands and other features.

Agriculture – The Greater Golden Horseshoe contains some of Canada's best agricultural land. Both the Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow have policies supporting and protecting an Agricultural System that is comprised of an

agricultural land base (prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and other productive lands that form a continuous land base for agriculture) and an agri-food network (infrastructure, services and assets that support the agri-food sector).

Infrastructure – Both the Greenbelt Plan and A Place to Grow recognize that new infrastructure and upgrades to existing infrastructure will be needed to serve the substantial growth projected for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Infrastructure, including highways to sewage and water treatment plants to corridors for transit and utilities, is permitted in these plans subject to certain conditions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 5:

- How should we balance or prioritize any potential Greenbelt expansion with the other provincial priorities mentioned above?

Question 6:

- Are there other priorities that should be considered?

Supporting materials

Related files

[Paris Galt Moraine Study Area Map \(high resolution\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20Paris%20Galt%20Moraine%20Study%20Area%20Map%20FINAL.pdf)
(<https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20Paris%20Galt%20Moraine%20Study%20Area%20Map%20FINAL.pdf>)
pdf.(Portable Document Format file) 2.91 MB

[Urban River Valleys Map \(high resolution\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL.pdf)
(<https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL.pdf>)
pdf.(Portable Document Format file) 3.37 MB

[Paris Galt Moraine Study Area Map \(low resolution\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20Paris%20Galt%20Moraine%20Study%20Area%20Map%20FINAL.pdf)
([https://prod-environmental-](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20Paris%20Galt%20Moraine%20Study%20Area%20Map%20FINAL.pdf)

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[Urban River Valleys Map \(low resolution\) \(https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL%20300dpi%20%281%29.pdf\)](https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-02/Feb%2017%202021%20%E2%80%93%20URV%20Map%20FINAL%20300dpi%20%281%29.pdf)
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Related links

[Greenbelt Plan \(https://www.ontario.ca/document/greenbelt-plan-2017\)](https://www.ontario.ca/document/greenbelt-plan-2017)

[A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe \(https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe\)](https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe)

View materials in person

Important notice: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, viewing supporting materials in person is not available at this time.

Please reach out to the Contact listed in this notice to see if alternate arrangements can be made.

Let us know what you think of our proposal.

Have questions? Get in touch with the contact person below. Please include the ERO (Environmental Registry of Ontario) number for this notice in your email or letter to the contact.

[Read our commenting and privacy policies. \(/page/commenting-privacy\)](/page/commenting-privacy)

Submit by mail

greenbeltconsultation@ontario.ca

Comment

Connect with
US

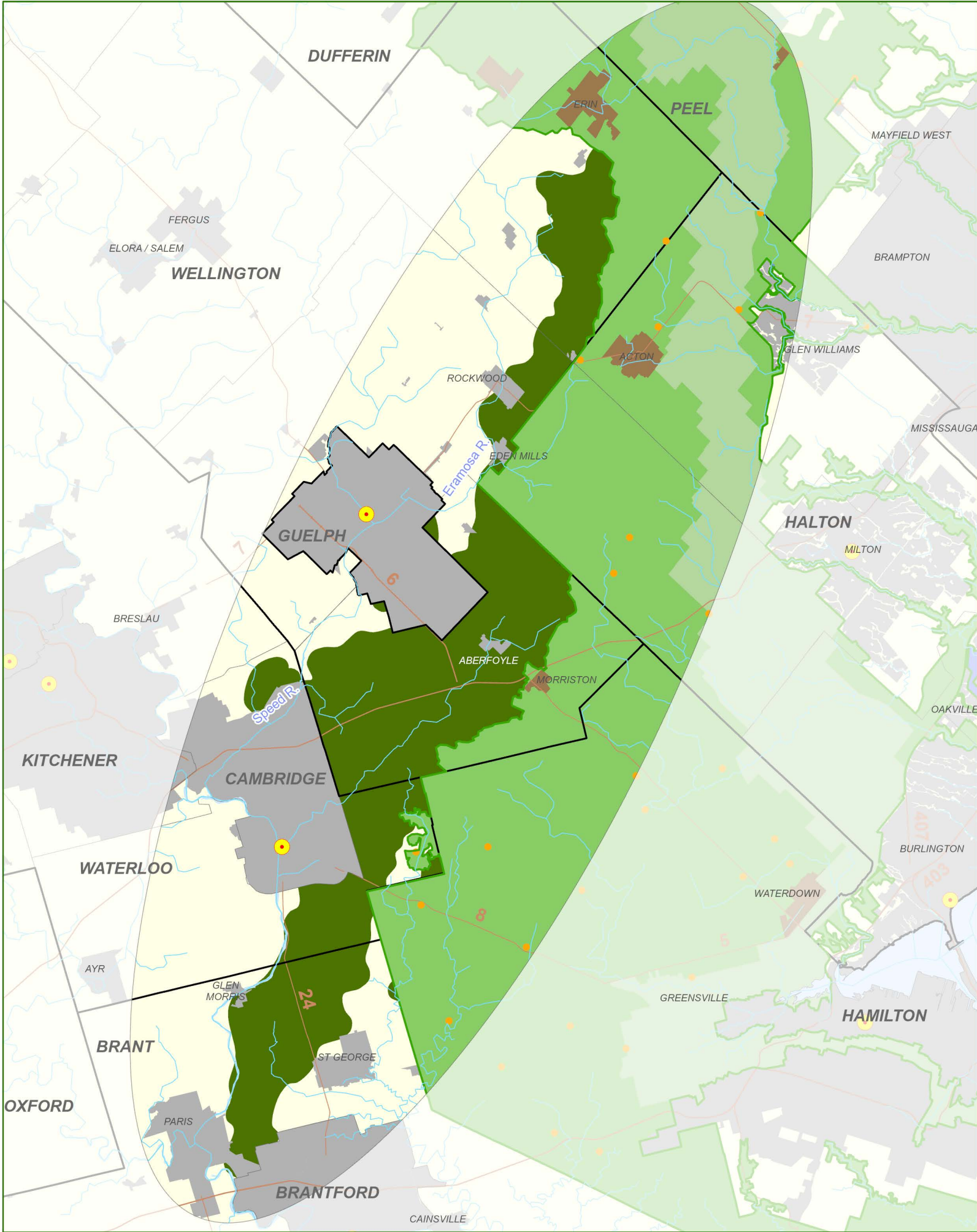
Contact

greenbeltconsultation@ontario.ca



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Growing the Greenbelt Study Area – Paris Galt Moraine



LEGEND

- Greenbelt Area (O.Reg. 59/05, as amended)
- Protected Countryside
- Towns / Villages
- Hamlets
- Urban River Valleys
- Niagara Escarpment Plan Area
- Paris Galt Moraine Study Area
- GGH Settlement Areas Outside the Greenbelt (incl. Brantford/Brant Annexation)
- Municipal Boundary
- Water
- Urban Growth Centres
- Major Road or Highway

This map is for illustrative purposes only to seek feedback on a Study Area of lands focused on the Paris Galt Moraine, growing the Greenbelt. The Paris Galt Moraine Study Area does not constitute a Greenbelt boundary.

Settlement boundaries generally reflect information provided by the relevant municipality. For precise boundaries and locations of Settlement Areas (e.g. Settlements Areas Outside the Greenbelt and Greenbelt Towns/Villages and Hamlets), the appropriate municipalities should be consulted.

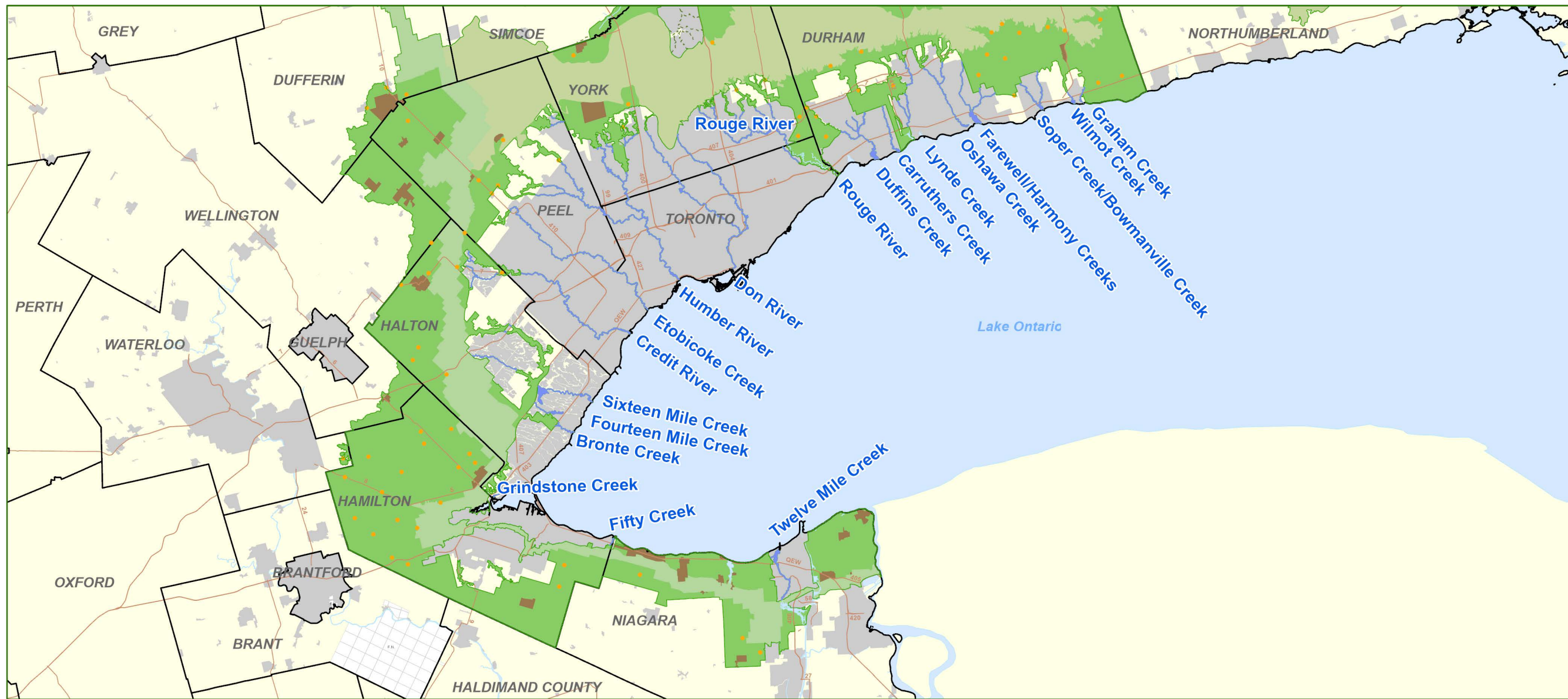
Source of Information:
Produced by and using data sources from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Projection: UTM Zone17 NAD83

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Greenbelt Area – Urban River Valleys



LEGEND

- Greenbelt Area (O.Reg 59/05, as amended)
- Protected Countryside
- Towns / Villages
- Hamlets
- Urban River Valleys
- Niagara Escarpment Plan Area
- Oak Ridges Moraine Area
- GGH Settlement Areas Outside the Greenbelt (incl. Brantford/Brant Annexation)
- External Connections
- Municipal Boundary
- Major Road or Highway
- Water
- F.N. First Nations

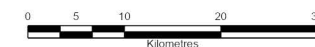
This map is for illustrative purposes only to seek ideas for adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys.

Settlement boundaries generally reflect information provided by the relevant municipality. For precise boundaries and locations of Settlement Areas (e.g. Settlements Areas Outside the Greenbelt and Greenbelt Towns/Villages and Hamlets), the appropriate municipalities should be consulted.

Source of Information:

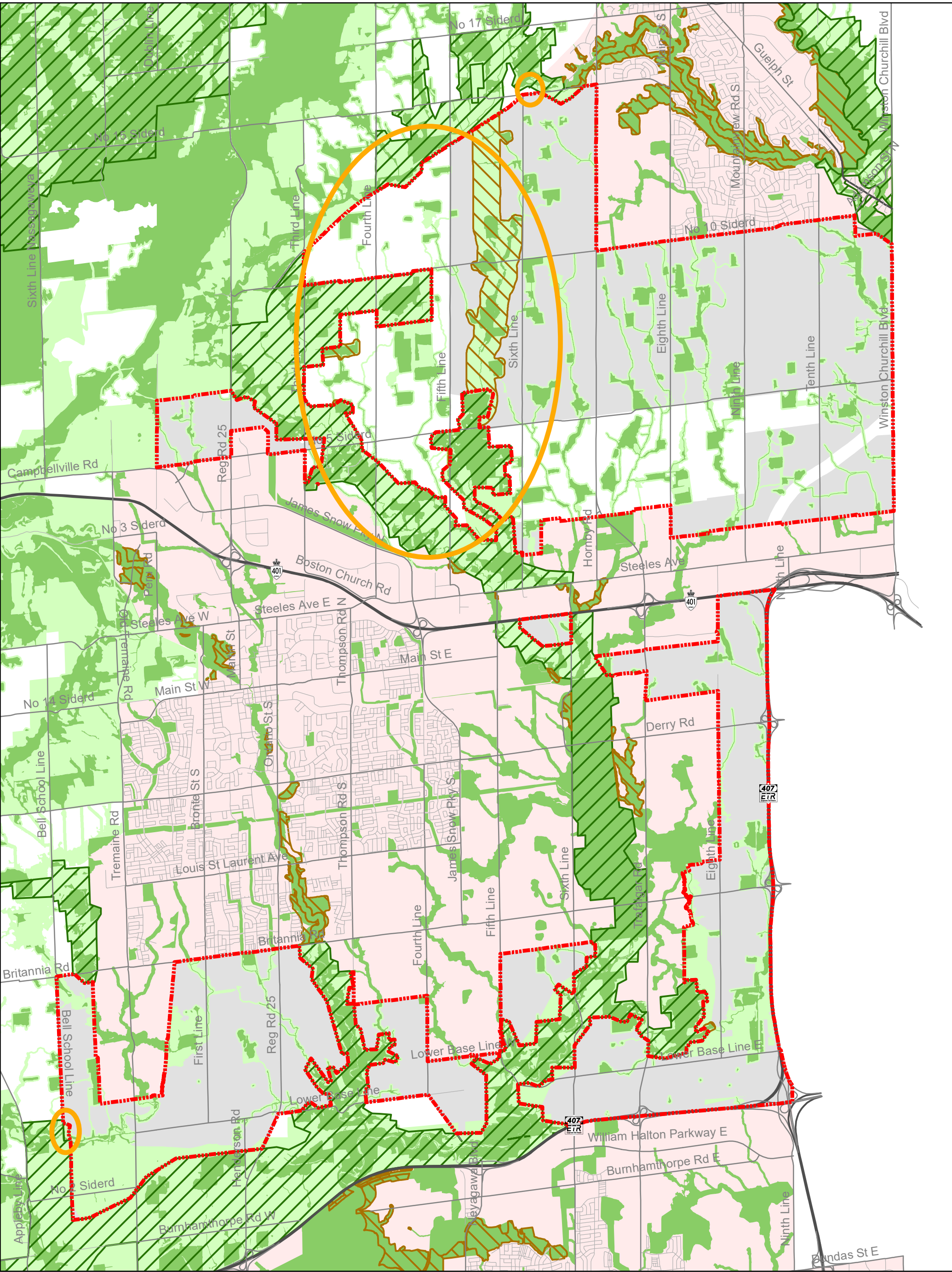
Produced by and using data sources from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Projection: UTM Zone17 NAD83
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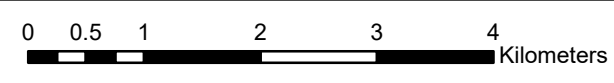


Growing the Greenbelt - Natural Heritage System

Milton / Halton Hills



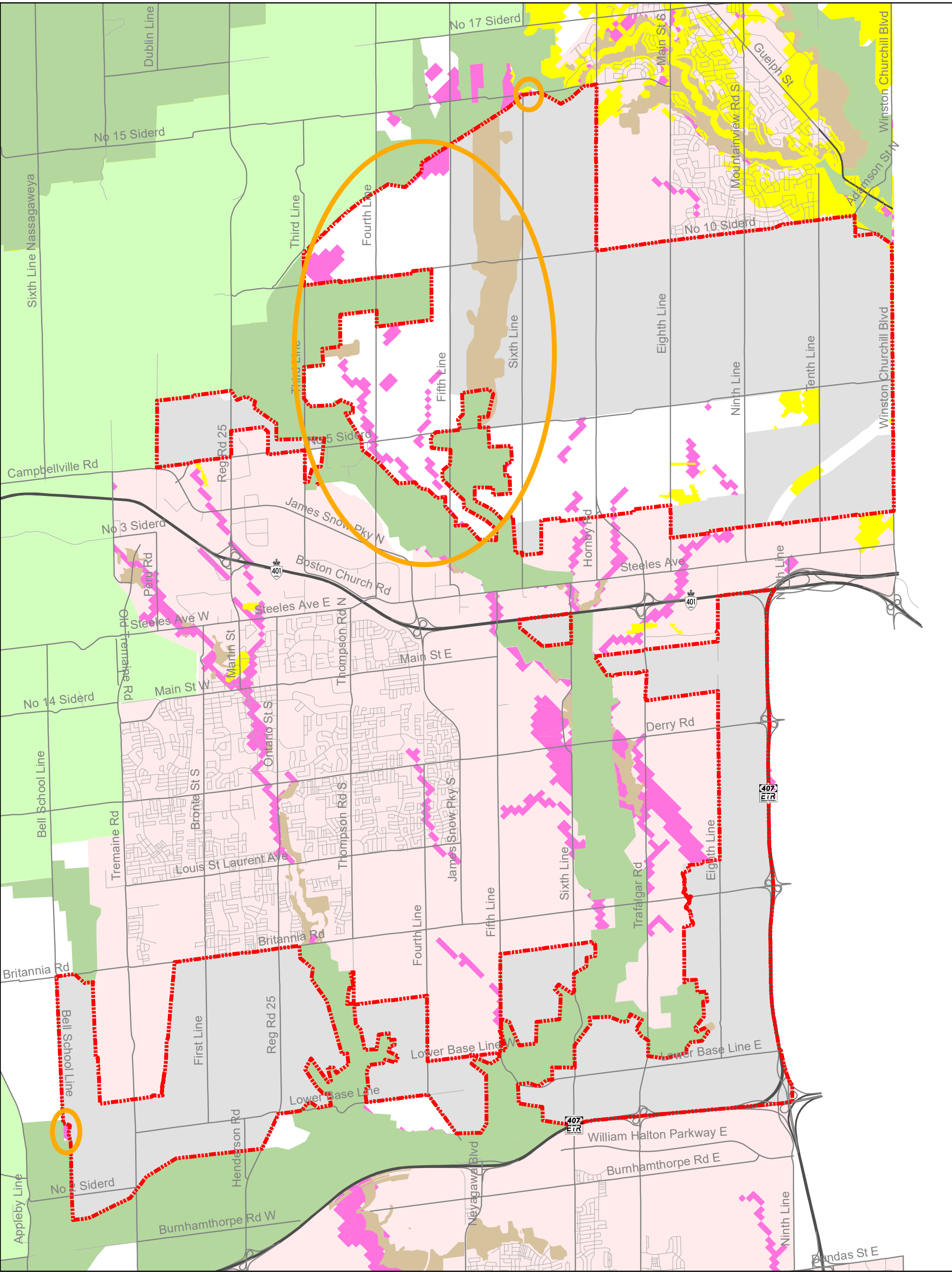
- Minor Roads
- Highway
- Major Roads
- Whitebelt
- IGMS Primary Study Area
- Settlement Area
- Draft Key NHS
- Draft System NHS
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Natural Heritage System
- Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System
- Recommended Candidate Study Area



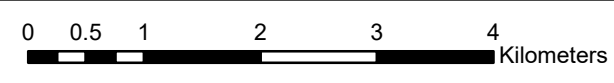
Growing the Greenbelt - Source Water Protection

Milton / Halton Hills

March 1, 2021



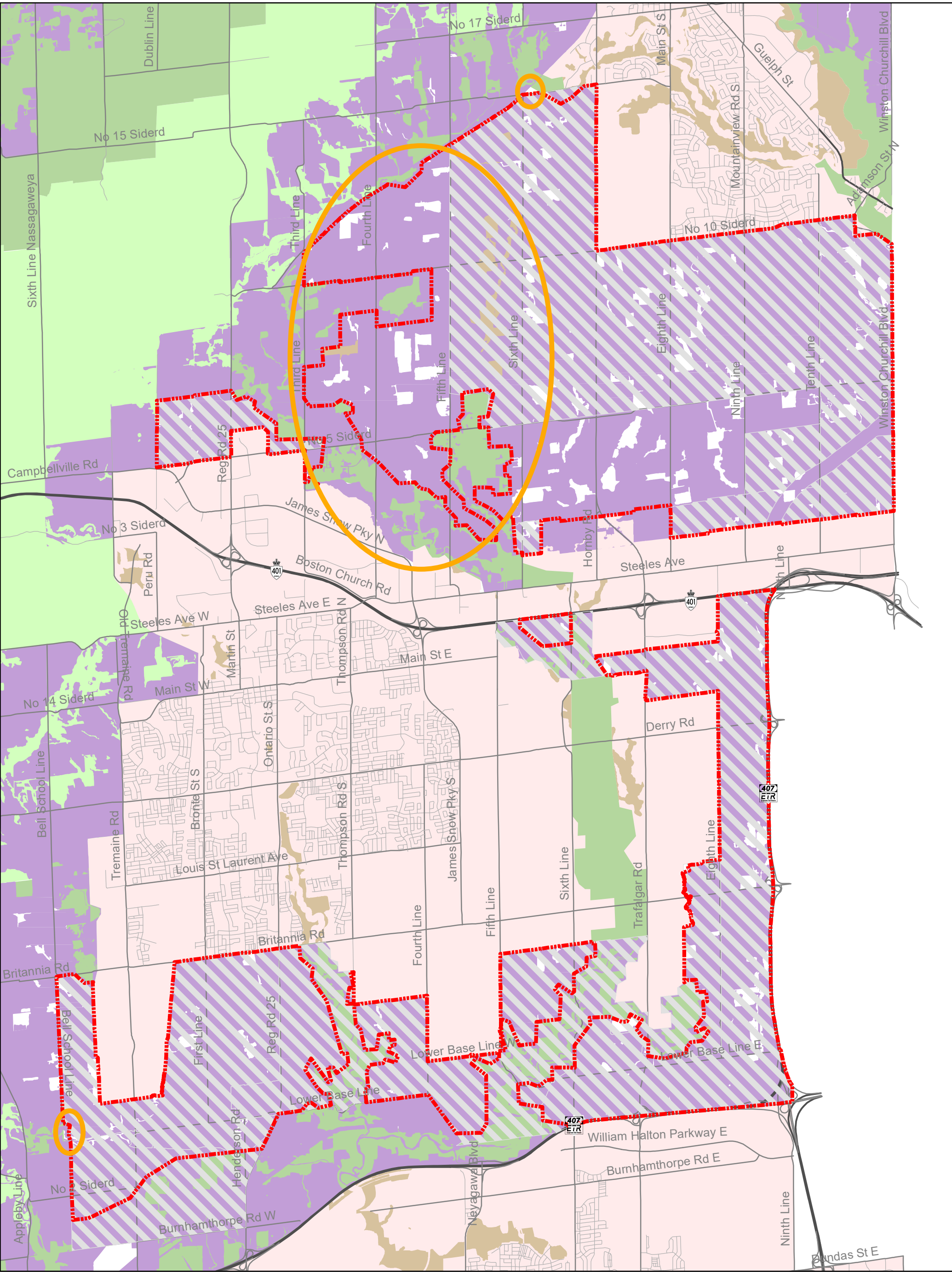
- Minor Roads
- Highway
- Major Roads
- Whitebelt
- IGMS Primary Study Area
- Settlement Area
- Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Natural Heritage System
- Niagara Escarpment Plan Area
- Recommended Candidate Study Area
- Significant Ground Water Recharge Area
- Highly Vulnerable Aquifer



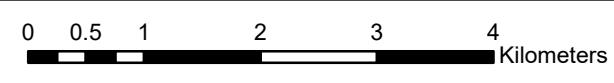
Growing the Greenbelt - Draft Prime Agricultural Area

Milton / Halton Hills

March 1, 2021



- Minor Roads
- Highway
- Major Roads
- Whitebelt
- IGMS Primary Study Area
- Settlement Area
- Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Natural Heritage System
- Niagara Escarpment Plan Area
- Draft Prime Agricultural Area



Recommended Candidate Study Area





**ERO 019-3136: Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt
Halton Region Submission**

Question 1:

- **What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of the Study Area of the Paris Galt Moraine?**

On March 27, 2019 Halton Regional Council unanimously passed a notice of motion to support and endorse the passage of Bill 71, the *Paris Galt Moraine Conservation Act, 2019*. The Paris Galt Moraine traverses the northern and north-west portion of Halton Region within the Town of Halton Hills and the Town of Milton. The Council Resolution noted that:

- municipalities within the Grand River watershed are dependent on groundwater as the source of municipal drinking water,
- critical primary recharge areas in the moraines require protection in order to protect the future drinking water supplies in this area,
- a conservation plan for the Paris and Galt moraines would provide an important policy framework to protect the critical ecological and hydrological integrity of the area, and
- the inter-jurisdictional complexity of the Paris and Galt moraines warrants the assistance of provincial leadership in the development of policy for its protection.

Given the critical hydrological and ecological functions of the Paris Galt Moraine, Halton Region strongly supports the study of this important ground water feature for permanent protection under the Greenbelt Plan.

The “Growing the Greenbelt Study Area – Paris Galt Moraine” map included in the proposal does not delineate the full extent of the Paris Galt Moraine within Halton Region. On the study area map, the Greenbelt Plan Area is overlain on the Paris Galt Moraine and it is difficult to determine if the study area within Halton Region is fully capturing the moraine feature and adjacent areas that may contribute to or benefit from the ecological and hydrological functions of the Paris Galt Moraine. It would appear that the Study Area includes the watershed jurisdictions of the Grand River Conservation Authority, Conservation Halton and Credit Valley Conservation. Halton Region requests that the Province provide a GIS data layer of the Paris Galt Moraine to help determine whether the Study Area is appropriate within Halton Region.

Question 2:

- **What are the considerations in moving from a Study Area to a more defined boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine?**

According to the Region's Natural Heritage System GIS mapping data, it appears that the Study Area contains:

- Life Science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (e.g. Galt Moraine at Corwhin, Moffat Moraine, Halton Forest North, Halton Forest South, Silver Creek Valley, Terra Cotta Forest and Ballinafad Swamp and Bog);
- Earth Science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (e.g. Blue Springs Creek Wetlands, Knatchbull Swamp, Brookville Swamp, Speyside Forest, and Quarry Northeast of Limehouse);
- Provincially Significant Wetland Complexes (e.g. Eramosa River – Blue Springs Creek Wetland Complex, Arkell – Corwhin Wetland Complex, Knatchbull Wetland, Halton Escarpment Wetland Complex, Acton – Silver Creek Wetland Complex, and Caledon Mountain Wetland Complex);
- Other wetlands identified by the Province (e.g. Ballinafad Woods Wetland);
- Unevaluated wetlands;
- Wetlands and watercourses regulated by the Conservation Authorities;
- Candidate significant woodlands;
- Potential significant wildlife habitat;
- Potential habitat of endangered and threatened species;
- Potential fish habitat;
- Enhancement areas, linkages and buffers or Vegetation Protection Zones.

The Study Area also contains drinking water Well Head Protection Areas for Quality and Well Head Protection Areas with Moderate to Significant Risk to Quantity, as identified in the Grand River Source Protection Plan and CTC Source Protection Plan. The Source Protection Plans also identify Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas, Highly Vulnerable Aquifers, Hydrogeologically Sensitive Areas, and a Quantity Intake Protection Zone.

The important connections and interactions between natural heritage and hydrological features and areas must be considered in defining the boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine to be included in the Greenbelt Plan. For example, groundwater and surface water systems that feed Provincially Significant Wetlands should be protected to support the long-term ecological functions of wetlands and the habitats they provide. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the protection of groundwater and surface water systems and hydrological features and areas that provide sources of drinking water.

While part of the Paris Galt Moraine is currently located within the Greenbelt Plan Area within Halton Region, it is unclear if the entire Moraine is identified as part of the

Greenbelt Natural Heritage System. Halton Region recommends that the full extent of the Paris Galt Moraine is identified as a component of the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System within Halton.

In addition, as Halton Region relies on technical advice from our partner Conservation Authorities that have jurisdiction within the Paris Galt Moraine Study Area. Halton Region will seek technical advice from our partner Conservation Authorities regarding technical considerations that should be included in moving toward a more defined boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine. The Province is encouraged to consult with the Conservation Authorities to identify a defined boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine within the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside.

Question 3:

- **What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys?**

Fourteen Mile Creek is designated as an Urban River Valley in North Oakville however the designation currently terminates at the North Service Road and does not connect to Lake Ontario (Attachment #1). Regional staff recommend studying the remaining portion of the Fourteen Mile Creek Valley extending south to Lake Ontario for inclusion in the Urban River Valley designation.

Halton Region supports the Province's proposal to study increased Urban River Valley designations for public lands beyond 60-metres, where appropriate, consistent with natural heritage designations in local official plans.

Question 4:

- **Do you have suggestions for other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt?**

In applying the key Greenbelt expansion principles and Provincial priorities in the proposal, Regional staff have identified a potential study area for expanding the Greenbelt area in Halton Region. The lands west of the Growth Plan Natural Heritage System corridor (located between 5th Line and 6th Line) and adjacent to the Greenbelt Protected Countryside in the Town of Halton Hills form a strong physical and functional connection to adjacent Growth Plan and Greenbelt Natural Heritage Systems (Maps #1-2).

This area is particularly appropriate for study for consideration to grow the Greenbelt area because of its strong physical and functional connection to the existing Greenbelt Protected Countryside and Greenbelt Natural Heritage System in Halton Region. Key natural heritage and hydrological features and areas in this area form north-south corridors that extend from the Provincial Natural Heritage Systems and provide wildlife movement and seed dispersal across the Middle Sixteen Mile Creek sub-watershed up to the Niagara Escarpment. Additionally, these lands are already bounded by the Growth Plan Natural Heritage System and would therefore require enhanced

infrastructure crossings to support potential future urban expansion were it not permanently protected.

Key Features and Components of the Regional Natural Heritage System within these areas include:

- Candidate significant woodlands;
- Potential significant wetlands;
- Other wetlands;
- Watercourses and floodplain regulated by Conservation Halton;
- Potential significant wildlife habitat;
- Potential habitat of endangered and threatened species;
- Potential fish habitat;
- Enhancement areas, linkages and buffers.

In addition, this area contains Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas, Highly Vulnerable Aquifers and Hydrologically Sensitive Areas, which extend into the Greenbelt Protected Countryside and Niagara Escarpment Plan Area.

The proposed study area to expand the Greenbelt in Halton builds upon the systems approach of the Greenbelt Plan and would enhance and strengthen the protection of key natural heritage and hydrological features and areas within the Region that support the functions of the Provincial natural heritage and water resource systems.

The proposed Greenbelt expansion study area is also comprised of prime agricultural lands which connects to the prime agricultural area within and beyond Halton's borders and supports the agricultural system in bringing local food and other goods to local markets (Map #3). These lands are predominantly made up of Class 1-3 soils according to the Canadian Land Inventory. Given that prime agricultural soils are a finite, valuable resources, once these lands are converted, they are permanently lost. The proposed Greenbelt expansion study area would be an important mechanism to support Regional Council's direction to introduce a permanent agricultural preserve in Halton Region to support the Agricultural System over the long-term.

There may also be opportunities to study minor technical refinements to the Greenbelt area to include adjacent agricultural lands and natural heritage features and areas that functionally connect to the Greenbelt, such as along the northern edge of No. 15 Sideroad east of Sixth Line in the Town of Halton Hills (Maps #1-3).

Any study areas that are being considered for inclusion in the Greenbelt area should involve extensive in-person consultation with the public.

Question 5:

- **How should we balance or prioritize any potential Greenbelt expansion with the other provincial priorities mentioned above?**

Halton Region has contemplated expansion study areas in accordance with the key Greenbelt expansion principles and Provincial priorities identified in the proposal.

Growth Management

The consultation requires that Greenbelt expansions not impede growth management exercises being conducted through municipal comprehensive reviews. Halton's proposed Greenbelt expansion study areas exclude Future Strategic Employment Areas (including Provincially Significant Employment Zones) and areas contemplated for urban expansion through the four Growth Concepts. According to Halton's initial Integrated Growth Management Strategy (IGMS) Land Needs Assessment, there are 10,108 ha of white belt lands within the Region, however no more than 3,300 ha of additional urban land would be needed to accommodate population and job growth to 2051 at the lowest rates of intensification. At the greatest rate of intensification, no more than 980 ha of new urban land would be required to accommodate job growth to 2051.

The proposed Greenbelt expansion study area in the Town of Halton Hills would not impede Halton's ability to accommodate Provincial growth projects to 2051 and would support Regional Council's direction to establish firm urban boundaries which protect Halton's rural, agricultural, and natural areas while also promoting intensification and the continued development of complete communities in Halton's existing urban areas.

Natural Heritage and Water Resources

The Province's proposal requires that potential Greenbelt expansion study areas build on natural heritage and water resource systems, features, and areas, including habitat for endangered and threatened species. Among other assets, the proposed Greenbelt expansion study area include candidate significant wetlands, watercourses and floodplain regulated by Conservation Authorities, and potential significant wildlife habitat. Features in the proposed study area form north-south corridors that generally extend from the Provincial Natural Heritage Systems. The Western Study Area in particular provides wildlife movement and seed dispersal across the Middle Sixteen Mile Creek sub-watershed up to the Niagara Escarpment.

In addition, these areas contain Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas, Highly Vulnerable Aquifers and Hydrologically Sensitive Areas, which extend into the Greenbelt Protected Countryside and Niagara Escarpment Plan Area.

Including these areas builds upon the systems approach of the Greenbelt Plan and would enhance and strengthen the protection of key natural heritage and hydrological

features and areas within Halton Region that support the functions of the Provincial natural heritage and water resource systems.

Agriculture

The Province's proposal requires that potential Greenbelt expansion study areas consider protection of the Agricultural System including maintenance or enhancement of the continuity of the agricultural land base and agri-food network. The proposed study areas are comprised of prime agricultural lands which support continuity of the prime agricultural area within and beyond Halton's borders and supports the agricultural system in bringing local food and other goods to local markets.

The development of the Rural Agricultural Strategy identified the need for long-term certainty for farming businesses in making business decisions and investments as well as the desire to have permanent protections for these lands. Halton's white belt lands outside of the Greenbelt Area are predominantly prime agricultural lands with productive and fertile Class 1-3 soils according to the Canadian Land Inventory. Given that these productive prime agricultural lands are a finite, valuable resource, once these lands are converted for urban development, they are permanently lost.

The proposed Greenbelt expansion study area would support Regional Council's direction to consider the establishment of an agricultural preserve to support the Agricultural System within Halton for the long-term.

Infrastructure

The Province's proposal requires that potential Greenbelt expansion study areas consider how the Greenbelt Plan area will continue to accommodate new and upgraded infrastructure to serve growth such as highways, sewage and water treatment, corridors for utilities and transit. Halton Region's recommended study area would preserve lands for future infrastructure supporting growth and would not create impediments.

If the proposed Greenbelt expansion study area was contemplated for new urban lands instead, linear infrastructure serving growth in this area could face impediments in crossing through the Growth Plan Natural Heritage System located between 5th Line and 6th Line.

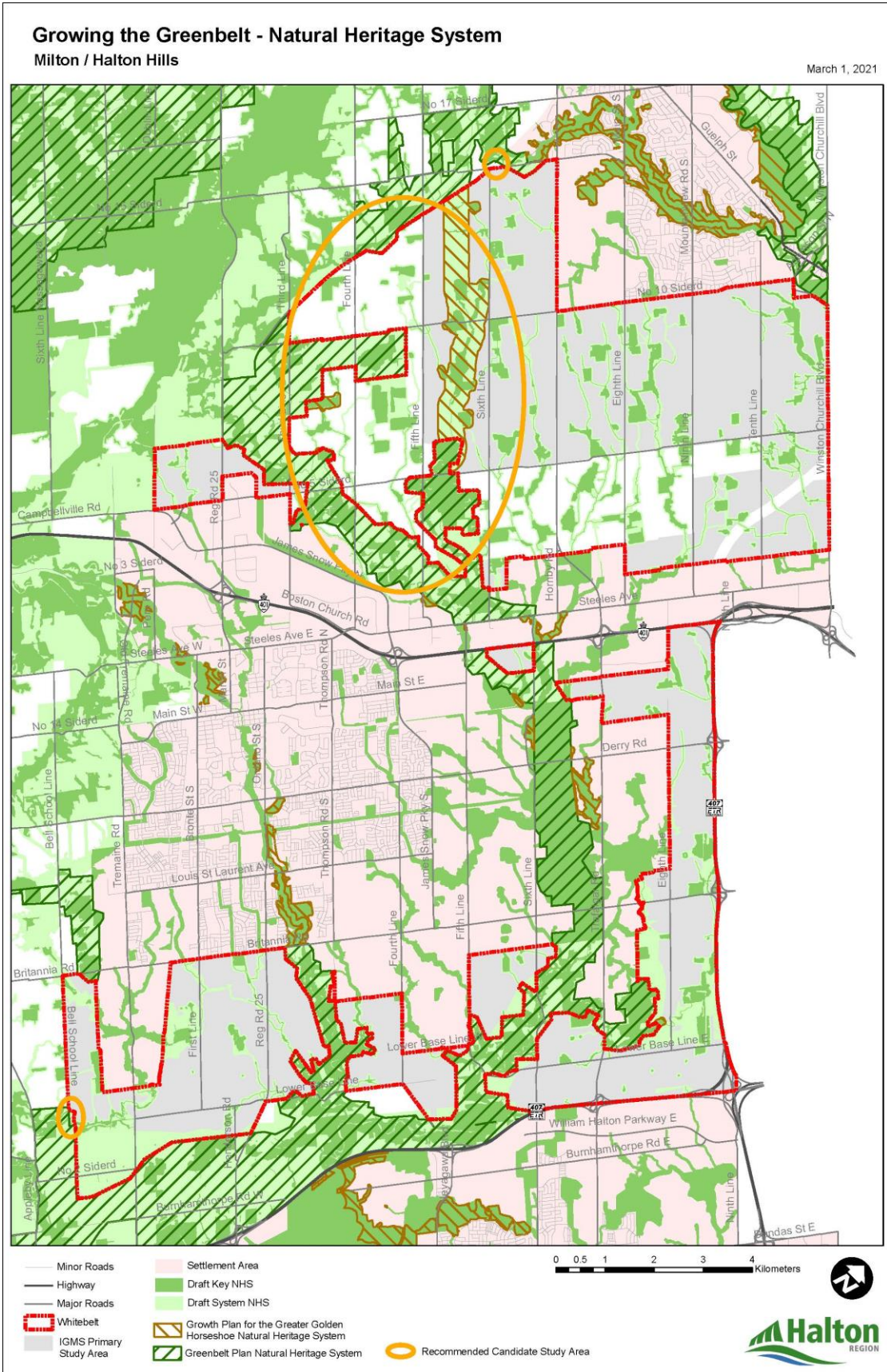
Question 6:

- **Are there other priorities that should be considered?**

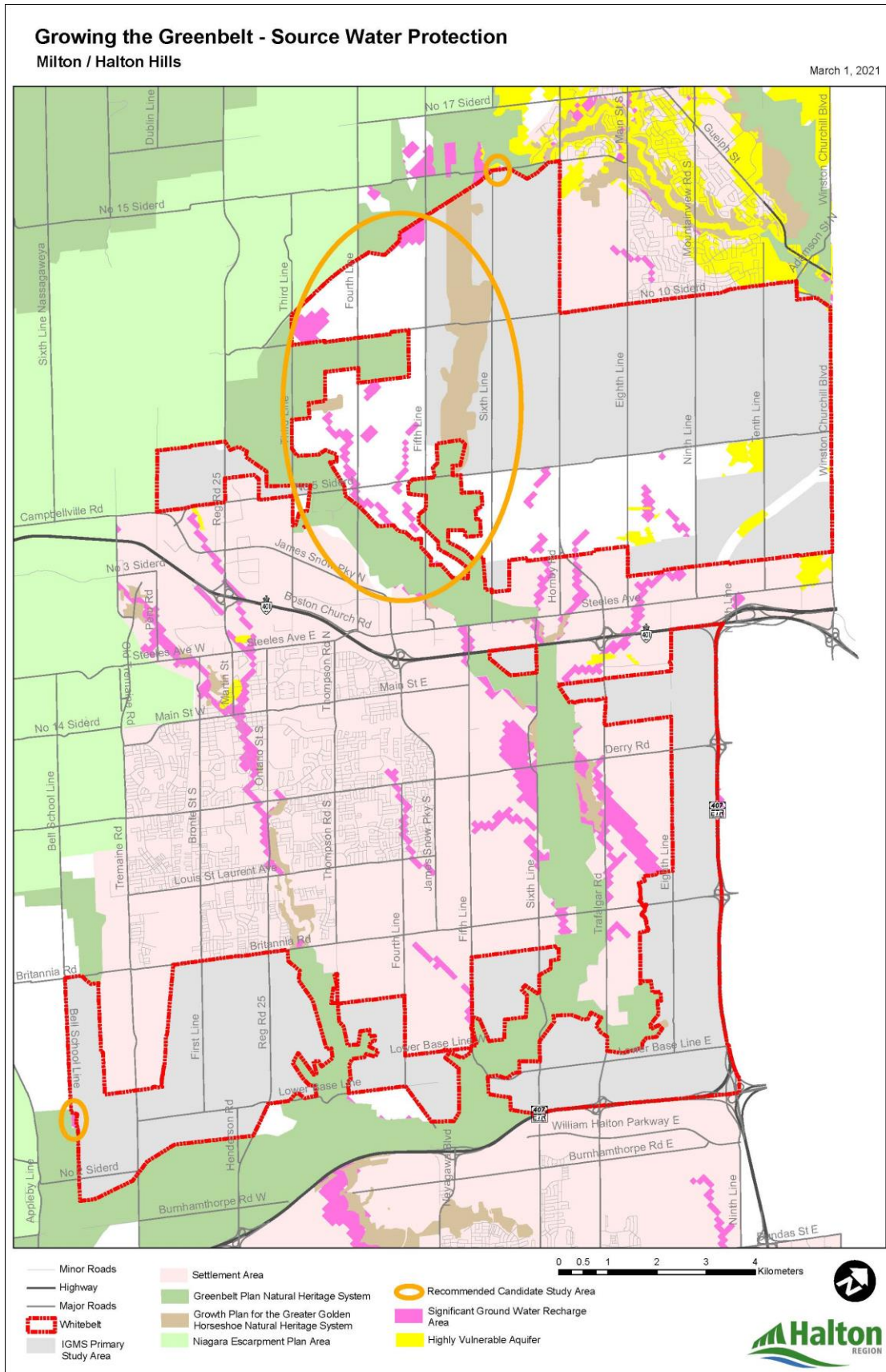
Growing the Greenbelt to include additional natural heritage and hydrologic features and areas will support the protection and enhancement of resilient natural heritage and water resources systems that aim to mitigate and adapt to effects of climate change. Carbon from the atmosphere is absorbed and stored in the biomass of the natural

heritage system (e.g. trees, soils and vegetation). Healthy watersheds are more resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as flooding, droughts and extreme weather events like ice storms. A more robust Greenbelt area would contribute to the Province's climate change response and help built healthy and resilient communities.

Map #1



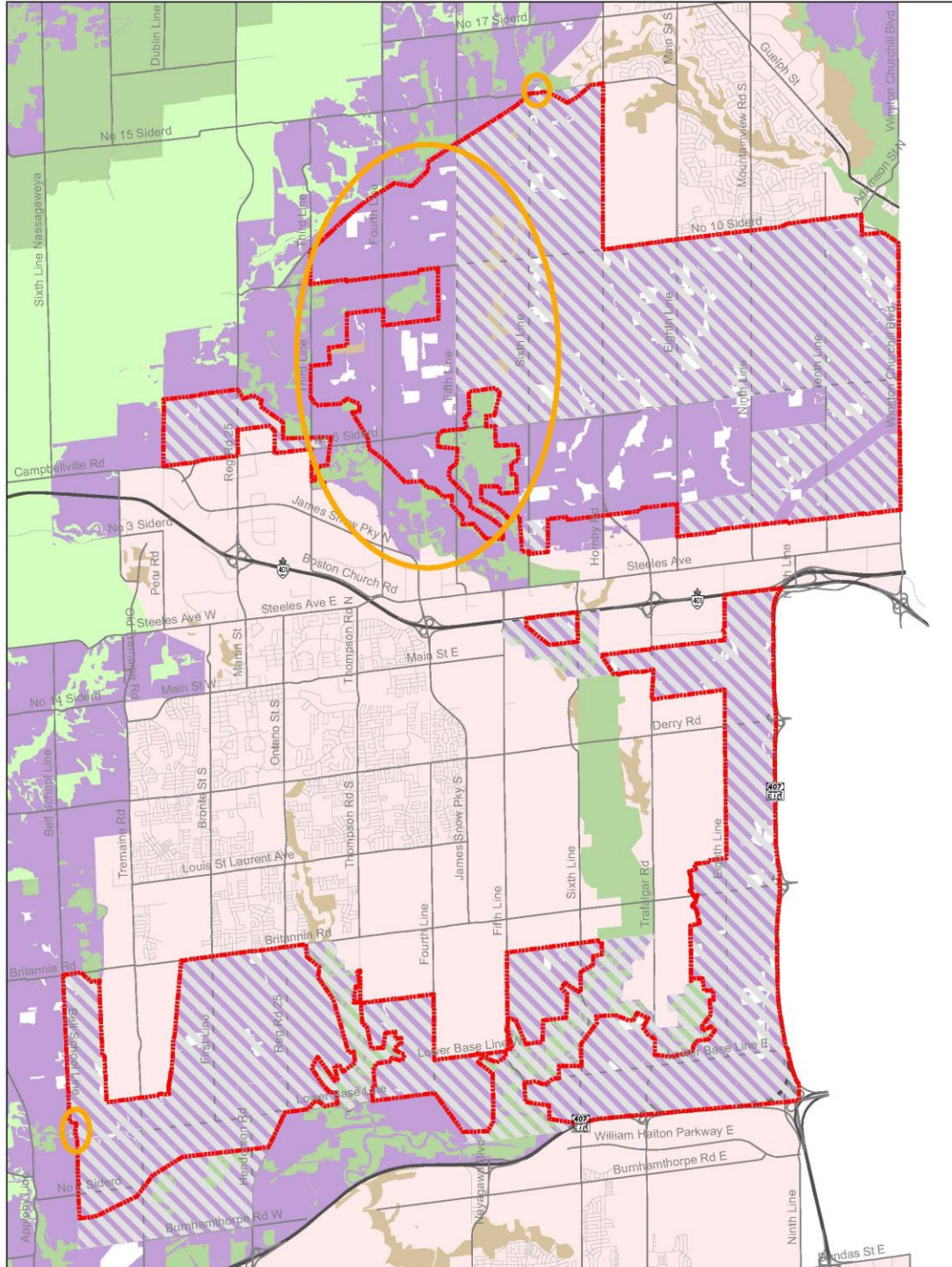
Map #2



Map #3

Growing the Greenbelt - Draft Prime Agricultural Area
Milton / Halton Hills

March 1, 2021



- Minor Roads
- Highway
- Major Roads
- Whitebelt
- IGMS Primary Study Area
- Settlement Area
- Greenbelt Plan Natural Heritage System
- Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Natural Heritage System
- Niagara Escarpment Plan Area
- Draft Prime Agricultural Area

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Kilometers



 Recommended Candidate Study Area