

The Corporation of the Town of Lakeshore

Report to Council

Community & Development Services

Development Services



To: Mayor & Members of Council

From: Kim Darroch, Manager of Development Services

Date: April 9, 2020

Subject: Employment Lands Strategy

Recommendation

1. Council receive the report entitled “Employment Lands Strategy – Phase 1, Town of Lakeshore, Final Report” prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., dated January 31, 2020, and attached to this report as Appendix A, and;
2. Council accept, and adopt, the population projections provided in the report entitled “Employment Lands Strategy – Phase 1, Town of Lakeshore, Final Report” prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., dated January 31, 2020, and attached to this report as Appendix A.

Background

In January, 2018, staff was directed by Council to report back on the process of developing an Employment Land Strategy (ELS), with the objective of expanding or creating new settlement areas in close proximity the Highway 401 corridor. Further to this, in May, 2018, Council directed administration to report back on what is required in order to develop new or expand employment lands along the 401 corridor.

As a result of these Council directives, staff sought to develop a Project Charter (attached to this report as Appendix B), which in March, 2019, Council endorsed along with a proposed budget for the preparation of an Employment Lands Strategy. In May, 2019, WSP Canada Group Limited, in partnership with Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. were chosen as the consulting team charged with the development of the Employment Lands Strategy, which would be used as background information for the Town’s upcoming Official Plan review.

Coinciding with the timing of the ELS development, the County of Essex was also in the process of planning for its required 5-Year Official Plan review, scheduled to commence in January, 2020. Knowing of the upcoming 5-year review, Lakeshore staff took a proactive approach to the County review, in that it would supply the findings of the

Town's ELS to the County as part of its participation in the County 5-Year Official Plan review.

In January, 2020, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., following considerable research and consultation, delivered the Employment Lands Strategy – Phase 1, Final Report, to the Town, thereby allowing Council's earlier directives to be met.

Comments

The ELS provides a comprehensive analysis of the current, and forecasted, employment lands and needs based on population and job growth within the Town. From the report, it is apparent that the Town is positioned to maintain and grow a strong employment sector throughout the 20-25 year forecast period. However, it is also apparent that existing servicing constraints in the Town need to be addressed in order for the Town to realize the forecasted growth, and sustain its employment activities.

The ELS is provides the Town the following:

- A brief overview of recent economic trends within the Windsor-Essex Region and the Town of Lakeshore;
- A long-term Town-wide population and housing growth forecast by structure type;
- A Town-wide forecast of long-term employment growth by major sector; and
- An assessment of future long-term employment land needs, which the Town of Lakeshore may use to support draft amendments to their O.P.”

It is noted that Phase 1 of the ELS provides a technical analysis of those items referenced immediately above.

As per the ELS document's Executive Summary, the following highlights are of note:

- The Town's population is forecasted to grow from 37,800 (2016) to 50,500 (2046) which equates to an average annual increase of 1% over the 30-year forecast period.
- The proportion of the seniors' population is forecasted to steadily increase over the coming decades, placing an increased demand on medium and high-density housing forms.
- Similar to the broader regional area as a whole, population growth within the Town is expected to be driven by net migration.
- Through the 2046 forecast period, the housing base is expected to increase by 6,400 households to approximately 19,500.
- The regional economy is currently in a recovery period following the 2008/09 global economic downturn. However, during this time the Town has experienced, and continues to experience, steady growth across many employment sectors.
- The Town's total employment is forecasted to increase from 13,500 (2016) to 21,700 (2046), or approximately 1.6% average annually.

- Approximately 189 net hectares (468 net acres) of vacant, potentially developable employment land exists in the Town. Despite this number, there is a limited inventory of large, serviced, vacant parcels for large-scale industrial development.
- To 2039 the Town is forecasted to add approximately 3,000 jobs to its designated Employment Areas, resulting in an absorption of 90 net hectares (223 net acres) of its current vacant employment land inventory. Based on the existing supply, the Town has a sufficient capacity to meet the long-term employment needs over the next 20-25 years, assuming the lands are serviced in a timely manner.
- A considerable amount of vacant employment lands are currently constrained with respect to water and wastewater servicing, representing approximately 70% (220 hectares / 544 acres) of the total vacant employment land supply, which has the potential to inhibit the Town's ability to rationalize the expansion of the Town's existing urban Employment Areas.
- If the constrained employment lands were removed from the existing inventory, the Town would potentially experience an employment land shortfall of between 33 to 53 net hectares (81 to 132 net acres) over the forecast period.
- It is noted that the identified net land does reflect site-specific take-outs, including open space, road, rail, stormwater ponds, etc.

Based on what is provided in the Employment Lands Strategy, attached to this report as Appendix A, Administration recommends that Council both receive the ELS document and accept and adopt the population projections which the document provides.

Next Steps

Council will recall that Phase 2 of the ELS study, which would have included some "*strategic planning policy recommendations*" was discontinued or suspended.

Council ultimately decided to discontinue Phase 2 of the Town's ELS study, as the County of Essex was undertaking Phase 1 of their required 5 Year Official Plan Review, which commenced in January 2020, starting with the County's Growth Projections exercise and Regional Employment Land Needs Study.

In the end, Administration will have to come back to Council with some strategic planning policy recommendations, which would include a Phase 2 of the Town's ELS study, subject to future budget approval. The strategic policy recommendations of the Phase 2 study, if adopted by Council, would better position Council for any potential appeals of the County Official Plan's population projections or settlement area policies to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal.

When the results of the County's Phase 1 Official Plan Review exercise is complete, Phase 1 of the Town's ELS may have to be updated or even revised with the next census of population, which is to take place in May of 2021.

Others Consulted

- Director of Community and Development Services
- Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.
- WSP
- County of Essex

Financial Impacts

The costs associated with the preparation of the Employment Lands Study were previously approved by Council. There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

Attachment(s):

Appendix A - ELS Report
Appendix B – Project Charter

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Employment Land Strategy.docx
Attachments:	- Appendix A Town of Lakeshore ELS Final Report.pdf - Appendix B ELS Project Charter_revised.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Apr 20, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tammie Ryall

Truper McBride