

TOWN OF LAKESHORE
COMMUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Kim Darroch, Manager of Development Services
DATE: December 4, 2019
SUBJECT: Employment Lands Strategy Update

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

1. This staff report be received for information;
2. The information compiled by the consultants on the Employment Lands Strategy be used with the purpose of informing the Town's participation in the County of Essex's Five Year Official Plan Review, commencing in January 2020, starting with participation in the County's Growth Projections exercise and Regional Employment Land Needs Study; and
3. Council direct the Clerk to send this resolution and report to the County of Essex.

BACKGROUND:

On September 11th 2018, Council directed Administration to proceed with the development of an Employment Land Strategy for the Town of Lakeshore that includes exploring the need for converting lands along the Highway 401 corridor to employment uses in the future. This study would develop a comprehensive strategy to guide the designation and development of urban employment lands in the Town. In particular, the study focused on how to address employment land needs to better meet the Town's employment objectives. Section 3.3.2.1 of the Official Plan identifies the designation of additional employment lands through an ELS (Employment Land Strategy).

In May of 2019, WSP Canada Group Limited, in partnership with Watson & Associates Land Economists were chosen as the consulting team for the Employment Lands Strategy.

COMMENTS:

Administration, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor recently met with the County of Essex CAO and Planning Manager, and were advised that the County will be undertaking Phase 1 of their required 5 Year Official Plan Review commencing in January 2020. The County and lower tier municipalities are aware that the Town of Lakeshore has commenced work on an Employment Land Strategy with an objective to develop a long term strategy to establish future employment lands at the Highway 401. The initiative to study future employment lands along the 401 has generated interest in the region and created momentum for the County of Essex to initiate a regional employment land study as the first background study to their Official Plan Review process.

The regional process will include representation from the Town of Lakeshore and other Essex County member municipalities. Additionally, the City of Windsor will be invited to participate. The Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation has expressed interest in joining the conversation. Together, this dialogue will establish a truly regional approach to the Employment Lands Study and recommendations pertaining to the Highway 401.

With the entirety of the County now involved and committed to looking at the supply and need for future employment lands including the feasibility of employment lands along the Highway 401, Administration believes that now is the opportune time to upload the work done to date by Lakeshore on this initiative and continue advancing this important work at the County level. In doing so, Lakeshore has an opportunity to save additional expenditures on continuing this work alone in the amount of \$35,000.

As reported in the past to Council, the designation of employment lands is an upper tier jurisdiction and County support for any changes to employment lands must align with the County Official Plan. A truly regional proposal regarding employment lands along the Highway 401 would be the best approach with the Province as providing land use planning reasons to designate further employment lands along Highway 401 is difficult to provide and justify if considering only Lakeshore's land needs.

Currently, the County Official Plan includes population and employment forecasts to the year 2031, on which the current land budget is based and through which development opportunities are planned for its member municipalities, as a broad range of regional and local factors related to economics, demographics and infrastructure is anticipated to drive the rate of future economic and employment growth throughout the Town, over the longer term. These drivers will not only affect the rate and magnitude of employment growth, but will also influence the form, density and location of future employment growth on employment lands in Lakeshore.

The County 2020 budget for the preparation of background studies associated with the County Official Plan review was approved on December 4th. The budget approval confirms the County's intent to proceed with the economic development and employment land strategy.

The provincial government recently announced the Job Site Challenge program to create interest in assembling, servicing and promoting an inventory of mega sites in Ontario for industrial use (Appendix 2). Administration will explore opportunities with the County for the County to take the lead on submitting a proposal (or proposals) for the program.

OTHERS CONSULTED:

County of Essex
CN Watson and Associates Land Economists
WSP Planning Consultants

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

The 2019 Budget allocated \$100,000 for the Employment Lands Study. Of this \$100,000, \$38,000 was budgeted to Watson for the growth projections and demographic work. Watson's component is nearly completed, and will be shared with Council when available. Putting this work on hold and uploading further work to the County would save Lakeshore \$35,000 in consulting fees.

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Appendix 1: ELS Project Schedule
Appendix 2: Job Site Challenge

Project Schedule





Job Site Challenge

If you have a large tract of land or industrial site, learn how it could be marketed to domestic and international investors in Canada's first mega site program.

Overview

The Ontario government is developing an inventory of mega sites that can support large-scale manufacturing operations, to be marketed to international and domestic investors as part of the province's open for business, open for jobs strategy.

Mega sites are large tracts of land that are zoned for or could be zoned for advanced manufacturing use. They typically range from 500 to 1,500 acres in size. The sites should be serviced or serviceable by utilities, transportation and other infrastructure.

About the program

The Job Site Challenge is a partnership opportunity. The Ontario government provides valuable services to help make your site attractive to prospective investors.

Applicants are asked to submit a proposal and put forward their best case for sites that can compete among North America's best.

This is not a funding or grant program.

Benefits

If your site is selected to be part of the mega site inventory, you will benefit from:

- being endorsed and validated by an internationally recognized site selector
- a marketing campaign targeted at international and domestic investors, led by the Ontario government and site selector
- a streamlined approvals review process for any required provincial licences, permits and environmental approvals
- government support for a streamlined review of non-provincial licences, permits and approvals (including engaging with municipalities, agencies such as conservation authorities and utility companies)

If a company chooses your mega site, it could result in a lucrative long-term investment. It would also:

- create hundreds of good jobs in advanced manufacturing
- benefit local and surrounding communities
- create significant supply chain opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses locally
- generate income from the sale or lease of the land

Who can apply

You are invited to submit proposals for consideration if you are a:

- municipality
- economic development agency
- industrial property owner
- other interested party

Site eligibility

The site does not have to be shovel-ready. It should be as close to possible to being ready for development approval (for example, building permits).

Your proposal will be evaluated based on 13 criteria, including: