

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employment lands studies provide the backbone by which information is disseminated to local politicians, councils, decision makers, and citizens (Dempwolf, 2012). Without these studies and strategies, an inherent lack in informed decisions made regarding the present and future use of employment lands within a community would be the norm (Dempwolf, 2012). The purpose of this project is to provide a better understanding of the components of a good employment lands plan through the development and application of an employment lands evaluation framework and toolkit. This research project aims to answer the following questions:

1. In a post-industrial society, what does good planning within an employment lands context look like?
2. Do Canadian employment lands plans represent the latest cutting edge concepts and ideas regarding planning for employment lands within a post-industrial society?

In order to answer the research questions posed for this project, an evaluation methodology with four main objectives was established and carried out. The objectives of this research and evaluation are as follows:

1. To develop a set of criteria to inform a comparative framework in order to determine the degree to which a municipal employment lands plan conforms to the latest ideas and outlines for industrial lands plans developed in the United States,
2. To apply this framework to the comparative assessment of the Region of Niagara's Gateway Employment Lands Study (2011) and the Region of Waterloo's Industrial and Business Park Vacant Land Inventory and Demand Analysis (2006) and provide an evaluation of the two plans with recommendations for future employment lands analysis in these municipalities specifically,
3. To present recommendations for criteria to be included in future employment land plans released by other municipalities throughout Ontario, more generally, and
4. To provide recommendations regarding the utility of adapting an employment land study evaluation toolkit within the province of Ontario.

In terms of methodology, once the objectives were established, a framework for analysis and toolkit for evaluation was developed based on four categories in order to answer the overarching research question of what good planning in an employment lands context looks like. The categories for analysis in this project were plan quality, employment lands- specific plan quality, industrial site selection, and economic development and competitiveness. Each of the categories contained a variety of sub-questions for scoring and evaluation. Content analysis was conducted on two employment lands plans selected based on a pre-determined criteria, and scores between 0 and 2 were assigned for each sub-question. After the analysis was conducted, the Region of Waterloos plan scored 61% and the Region of Niagara's plan scored 66%.

Overall, the findings of this report suggest that the cutting edge employment lands research published to date can be applied within the Canadian context; however, further adjustments may be warranted. Ultimately, the toolkit developed for this study can be used by scholars and planning practitioners into the future to ensure employment lands plans of the highest quality are produced. The results of this research yielded the following nine recommendations:

Recommendation 1: *Establish indicators and timelines for implementation of action items and include these within the plan.*

Recommendation 2: *Include a cost-benefit analysis of implementation vs. non-implementation of the plan.*

Recommendation 3: *Include some discussion of surrounding uses and potential impacts.*

Recommendation 4: *In future studies and updates to the plan, include a detailed analysis of public transit linkages and transportation opportunities for future industrial workers.*

Recommendation 5: *In future studies and updates to the plan, increased consideration for employment and market conditions should be given.*

Recommendation 6: *In future studies and updates to the plan, increased consideration for demand for industrial land should be given.*

Recommendation 7: *In future studies and updates to the plan, increased consideration for organizational components should be given.*

Recommendation 8: *Repeat this analysis on additional Canadian employment lands plans to determine whether or not ILU-specific plan and industrial site selection categories need to be modified to fit the Canadian context.*

Recommendation 9: *Look to the categories, components and sub-questions used in this analysis to add more rigor and depth to future employment lands plans.*