

Municipal Conformity to the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*: An Evaluation of Future Density Potential Along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor in Burlington, Ontario

The Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is one of the fastest growing regions in North America and if low-density development trends are to continue, its cities and population will suffer. Cities must act now or the damaging effects of sprawl will worsen and contribute to the irreversible destruction of agricultural land and open spaces, unviable public transit systems, and increased automobile dependence and its damaging effect on quality of life.

The Government of Ontario has enacted legislation through the Places to Grow Act (2005) which requires municipalities to grow inward and upward rather than outward. This plan, entitled the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, designates “intensification corridors” as growth areas which are required to carry a high concentration of residents and jobs by 2031. Intensification corridors are intended to be transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly corridors that provide a focus for higher density mixed-use development.

Municipalities face several challenges in achieving provincial growth targets along intensification corridors. This is because intensification corridors throughout the GGH are typically auto-oriented and underdeveloped. In addition, there are several barriers towards successfully implementation intensification corridor strategies, such as the need for sustained interest and consistent interventions over a long development period and NIMBY (not in my backyard) reactions often being triggered due to the large interface most corridors have with established residential areas. The City of Burlington in particular must act without further delay to ensure its intensification corridors are planned to accommodate sufficient growth. This is because the northern half of the City is protected under the Greenbelt Protection Act (2005) and its greenfield areas will soon be built-out.

This study evaluates future density along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor in Burlington, Ontario to assess whether current municipal policies allow for sufficient development to meet *Growth Plan* density objectives for intensification corridors. The analytical framework developed for this study has four components:

- 1) evaluating existing built use and form with GIS maps and photographs;
- 2) calculating existing gross employment and residential density;
- 3) calculating future gross employment and residential density to 2031 under a “maximum build-out” scenario assuming future development will occur at the maximum density permitted by the Zoning By-law and a “business as usual” scenario assuming future growth will occur at densities consistent with existing development trends; and
- 4) comparing future gross density along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor with *Growth Plan* density objectives.

The results of this study confirm that existing development along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor currently underutilizes the corridor’s density potential and that existing gross densities (38 employees and residents per hectare) are lower than *Growth Plan* density objectives (minimum 80 employees and residents per gross hectare). Future gross density

calculations demonstrate that under existing municipal policies, it is possible that the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor will reach *Growth Plan* density objectives by 2031, however, the results suggest that it is unlikely to occur given existing development trends (Table E-1). In addition, the results of this study challenges previous studies completed by the City of Burlington which conclude that intensification corridors in the City will achieve sufficient intensification to meet *Growth Plan* density targets.

TABLE E-1. EXISTING AND FUTURE GROSS DENSITIES ALONG THE FAIRVIEW STREET INTENSIFICATION CORRIDOR USING ASSUMPTIONS FROM THE CITY OF BURLINGTON AND THE CURRENT STUDY

		City of Burlington	Current Study	
			Maximum Build-out	Business As Usual
EXISTING GROSS DENSITY				
Residential	<u>Persons Per Unit:</u>			
	Single Family & Semi-Detached	2.5	3.393	
	Multiples	2.5	2.491	
	Apartments	2.0	1.781	
	Total Existing Residential Population	1,611	1,662	
	Existing Gross Residential Density	9.62	9.93	
Employment	<u>Employment Density (sq. m/employee):</u>			
	Major Office	23	27	
	Population-Related: Institutional	37	70	
	Population-Related: Big Box	37	40	
	Employment: Prestige Industrial	93	60	
	Employment: General Industrial	93	80	
	Employment: Transportation & Storage	93	100	
	Total Existing Employees	6,883	4,678	
Existing Gross Employment Density	41.12	27.95		
Total	Existing Gross Res. & Employ. Density	50.74	37.88	
FUTURE GROSS DENSITY				
Residential	Persons Per Unit	2.0	1.781	
	Square Metre Per Unit	150	-	
	Total Future Residential Population	5,115	2,963	
	Future Gross Residential Density	30.56	17.70	
Employment	Floor Area Ratio	1.0	0.5 to .15	0.25 to 0.5
	<u>Employment Density (sq. m/employee):</u>			
	Major Office	23	27	
	Population-Related: Institutional	37	70	
	Population-Related: Big Box	37	40	
	Employment: Prestige Industrial	93	60	
	Employment: General Industrial	93	80	
	Employment: Transportation & Storage	93	100	
Total Future Employees	9,582	12,182	6,902	
Future Gross Employment Density	57.25	72.78	41.23	
Total	Future Gross Res. & Employ.	87.80	90.48	58.93

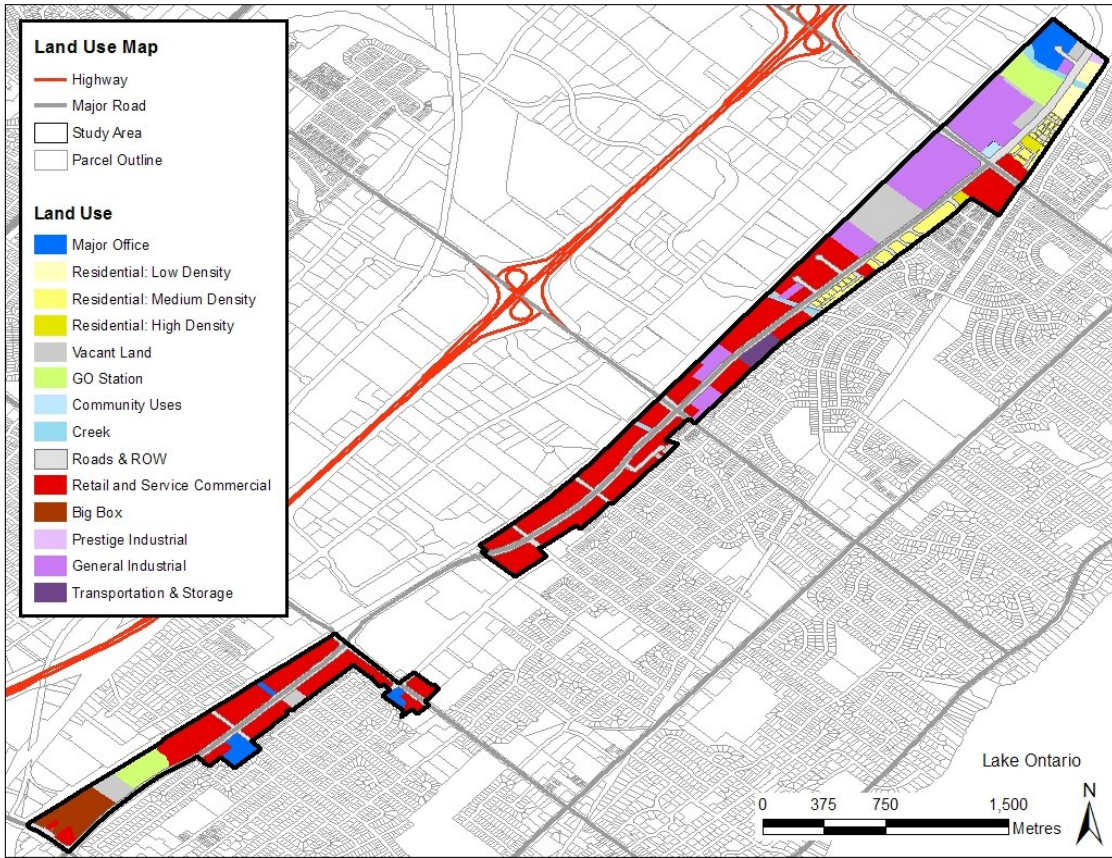
Based on this study's findings, several recommendations were developed for the City of Burlington to support the development of a compact Fairview Street Intensification Corridor that meets the *Growth Plan's* density objectives:

- The City of Burlington should address possible data quality issues that are highlighted by the large discrepancies found between gross density calculations made in this study and the City's intensification studies. Specific recommendations include:
 - maintaining a local employment inventory and conducting necessary studies to resolve the substantial difference in institutional employment density figures calculated in different studies for Burlington (i.e. 37 and 70 square metres per employee, Table E-1);
 - conducting a study to determine appropriate future land use mixes along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor based on different scenarios and backed by reports on future demographic characteristics and market preferences, among others; and
 - conducting a review of precedent intensification corridors in a suburban context to determine an appropriate average floor area ratio for future development along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor.

- The City of Burlington should investigate why landowners along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor are not maximizing development on their properties. An understanding of these under-development trends may assist the City to move in the right direction to promote further intensification along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor. Specific recommendations include:
 - conducting a market and real estate development analysis along the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor;
 - preparing a report on precedent cases wherein municipalities have attracted intensification along commercial strips similar to the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor; a review of policies and implementation tools which have led to increased densities in these precedent cases should be included; and
 - preparing a report on precedent cases where intensification policies have failed to increase development densities.

- The City of Burlington should move the development community away from business as usual and towards higher density development trends. Specific recommendations include:
 - reviewing minimum floor area ratio policies for precedent intensification corridors; and
 - conducting studies to assess the implications of expanding the Fairview Street Intensification Corridor boundary to include the gap (east of Guelph Line, containing Burlington Mall), as shopping malls provide significant opportunities for intensification.

MAP E-1. LAND USES IN THE FAIRVIEW STREET INTENSIFICATION CORRIDOR



MAP E-2. SITES WITH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE FAIRVIEW STREET INTENSIFICATION CORRIDOR

