
Executive Summary

The Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) is currently facing various planning challenges including growth constraints due to protected areas such as the Greenbelt, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and the Niagara Escarpment (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2017a); expected population and employment growth over the next 30 to 50 years (Artuso, 2017; Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2015); and the limited land available for development (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2015; Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2017a; Kushner & Ogowang, 2017; Pelley, 2017; Pagliaro, 2017). To address some of these challenges, the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (Growth Plan) came into effect in 2006. In 2017, the Growth Plan was updated with a focus on supporting complete communities, reducing traffic, improving transportation options, providing a variety of housing options, revitalizing downtowns, protecting green spaces and farmland, curbing sprawl, and promoting economic growth in the long-term (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2018). In the Growth Plan, urban intensification is encouraged to address these challenges. While intensification is considered a solution for many of these issues, intensification is complex and may be difficult to integrate into municipal planning (Jenks, Williams, & Burton, 2000; de Roo, & Miller, 2000).

The purpose of this report is to:

- Understand how urban intensification policy is framed in GGH official plans;
- Evaluate a number of GGH official plans to identify areas of strength and weakness; and,
- Outline recommendations for strategic, efficient, and sensitive intensification policy.

The research questions that will be addressed are:

- i. What are the strengths and weaknesses of urban intensification policy in the Greater Golden Horseshoe?
 - i.i. Are the expectations of the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* (2017) realistic?
- ii. What can the selected municipalities do in their policy frameworks to better implement urban intensification?
- iii. What role does tiering in the municipal planning process play in implementing intensification (e.g. upper-tier, lower-tier versus single-tier)?

The research for this report began by reviewing intensification literature, plan evaluation literature, and relevant Ontario legislation and policies. This was done in order to:

- Gather essential background information on urban intensification;
- Verify previous studies and research on urban intensification; and,
- Identify the critical characteristics or features of strategic and successful urban intensification. Based on this literature review, a set of intensification policy evaluation criteria was developed into an evaluation framework to assess the quality, strengths, and weaknesses of the official plans in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (see Chapter 4.0).

Ten municipalities from the GGH were then selected as a subset of GGH municipalities for evaluation. The municipalities were selected based on several factors, including: similar populations, density per square km, intensification policy, and/or their landlocked positions. Four Regional Municipalities (Halton, Peel, York, and Durham), a lower-tier municipality from each region (Burlington, Mississauga, Markham, and Whitby), and two single-tier municipalities (Toronto and Barrie) were selected.

Based on the literature review, an evaluation framework was also developed. This consists of several components:

- *Intensification criteria:*

Criteria	Description
C1: Strategic areas selected for intensification	Strategic areas are selected for urban intensification. This indicates that the municipality has carefully considered where intensification should take place (e.g. Downtowns).
C2: Avoid conflicting and harmful locations	Avoid conflicting uses and harmful locations (natural and man-made hazards). Intensifying an area does not put people or the environment at risk and uses that may conflict (e.g. housing and industry) are not in similar locations. This is not to be confused with C1 as specific locations or uses within the strategic areas are avoided to ensure safety.
C3: Public Transit/Active Transportation encouraged	Transit connections, networks, and/or systems are encouraged to limit traffic congestion, generation, and auto dependence. Active transportation is also encouraged.
C4: Connectivity, accessibility, and walkability promoted	The intensification in the urban area allows and promotes connectivity, accessibility, and walkability.
C5: Mixed-uses encouraged	Mixed-uses are encouraged. This includes a mix of housing, retail, etc.
C6: Green spaces and open spaces preserved, enhanced, and integrated	Intensification will not degrade or reduce open spaces, green spaces, greenbelts, (prime) agriculture, cultural heritage, and natural heritage.
C7: Intensification forms properly integrated	All or some intensification types (listed below) are properly integrated in existing urban/settlement areas: <input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield redevelopment; <input type="checkbox"/> Infill development; <input type="checkbox"/> Redevelopment; <input type="checkbox"/> Development of vacant/underutilized sites; <input type="checkbox"/> Conversion or expansion of residential/institutional buildings; and/or, <input type="checkbox"/> Greyfield.
C8: Intensification coordinates/compliments area (infrastructure)	The infrastructure, buildings, etc. coordinates with the area (e.g. height, shadow, setback).
C9: Design features of local area properly integrated (sensitive design)	The design and local characteristics of the area should be integrated, especially if historic or cultural elements/features are present in the area.
C10: Minimum target	As stipulated in the Growth Plan (2017), a minimum target is assigned to intensification.
C11: Maximum target	The intensification of an area has a maximum target or intensification cap. This is done to avoid town cramming or the over saturation of infrastructure, services, and other land uses in the area.
C12: Hard and soft infrastructure maximized and functional	The existing and/or approved area(s) for intensification has the service capacity (i.e. water, wastewater) and the ability to accommodate additional services such as community facilities, institutions, and employment.

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- *Plan components:*
 - Evidence;
 - Goals and Objectives;
 - Policy (Level I);
 - Policy (Level II);
 - Background Information; and,
 - Maps, Tables, Diagrams.
 - *General components:*
 - Public Participation/Engagement;
 - Implementation and Monitoring;
 - Organization and Presentation; and,
 - Inter-organizational Coordination.

Using the evaluation framework (see page 20), the official plans of the ten municipalities were evaluated by cross-checking each individual intensification criteria found in the official plans against each intensification evaluation component. Manifest and latent content analyses were used to search and evaluate the documents (Cope, 2016). First, ‘intensification’ was used to search the document and the sections where ‘intensification’ was found were read for context. If any criteria was not found through this preliminary search, key word searches developed through the literature review (e.g. connectivity, coordinate) were completed and the sections identified were read. A score of 0 or 1 was assigned based on whether the criterion was reflected in any of the plan components (0 = no; 1 = yes). For each criteria, a total score of 6 was possible, and for every plan, a total overall score of 72 was possible.

The four general components were evaluated based on whether intensification was present in some capacity within the official plans. As the four general components are already required or commonly included as sections in official plans, a score of 0 signified that intensification was not present beyond the standard general requirement; a score of 0.5 indicated that there was some mention of intensification; and 1 was assigned if there was a clear representation of intensification within the official plan under the general component. Although numerical values were assigned for the general components, a total overall score was not calculated. The values were used to indicate the presence of intensification in relation to these components. It should be noted that this is a separate or secondary evaluation that does not rely on the intensification criteria. These components were separated from the main plan components during the evaluation pretests.

Pretests were completed before the subset of municipalities were evaluated. This was done to adjust the evaluation framework and determine if it was applicable to Ontario municipalities. London, ON, and Guelph, ON were used as test cities.

From the evaluation, the municipalities were ranked from best to worst in terms of intensification policies based on their total overall score (out of 72):

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Mississauga (63) | 5. Burlington (45) |
| 2. Toronto (55) | 6. Peel Region (41) |
| 3. Markham (52) | 7. York Region (37) |
| 4. Whitby (46) (tied) | 8. Durham Region (36) |
| 4. Barrie (46) (tied) | 9. Halton Region (34) |

Table 1-1

Intensification Policy Evaluation Results (Criteria)
C1: Strategic areas selected for intensification
C2: Avoid conflicting and harmful locations
C3: Public Transit/Active Transportation encouraged
C4: Connectivity, accessibility, and walkability promoted
C5: Mixed-uses encouraged
C6: Green spaces and open spaces preserved, enhanced, and integrated
C7: Intensification forms properly integrated
C8: Intensification coordinates/compliments area (infrastructure)
C9: Design features of local area properly integrated (sensitive design)
C10: Minimum target
C11: Maximum target
C12: Hard and soft infrastructure maximized and functional

Table 1-2

Intensification Policy Evaluation Results (General Components)
Public Participation/Engagement
Implementation and Monitoring
Organization and Presentation
Inter-organizational Coordination

The evaluation determined which criteria and general components were in need of improvement (orange) and which performed well (blue) and are shown in Table 1-1 and Table 1-2. In depth case study analyses of Peel Region, Mississauga, Toronto, and Barrie were then conducted to further identify specific areas of weakness or strength with respect to intensification policy.

The following recommendations for intensification policy in Greater Golden Horseshoe municipalities emerged from this research:

1. Coordinate with other municipalities and organizations
2. Engage and collaborate with the community
3. Explore viable intensifications forms
4. Designate a chapter or section of the official plan to intensification
5. Develop a companion intensification document
6. Preserve and enhance green spaces, open spaces, and natural areas
7. Address low scoring criteria identified in Table 16
8. Developing intensification criteria is a valuable tool to evaluate the strength of intensification policies

The report identifies and elaborates on areas of policy that require enhancement in official plans, and suggests that clear policies can be developed to enforce more sustainable, successful, and strategic intensification in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.