Township of Springwater

Growth Management Study

Background Report

FINAL

May 2025

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Executive Summary

In Fall 2024 the Township of Springwater retained WSP Canada Inc. ("WSP") to conduct a Growth Management Study ("GMS") that will recommend a preferred growth scenario to guide population and employment growth to 2051 and beyond. To complete the work required for the GMS, WSP has assembled a team that includes Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., as well as a multidisciplinary group of professionals including planners, engineers, and engagement specialists. Together, this team will develop a growth management framework that meets Provincial and County requirements and aligns with the Township's strategic priorities.

This Background Report has been prepared as part of Phase 1 of the GMS. It summarizes the existing planning framework, including recent changes to Provincial planning policy and legislation including the new Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 ("PPS 2024"). This Report reviews the forecasts and growth allocations that were prepared as part of the Simcoe County Municipal Comprehensive Review ("MCR"), and the Council-adopted Simcoe County Official Plan Amendment 7 ("SCOPA 7"). It should be noted that at the time of this report, SCOPA 7 has not been approved the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing ("MMAH") and is not in-effect.

This Background Report also reviews the "Joint Land Needs Analysis and Study" that was prepared by Hemson Consulting, dated December 2024, and received by Springwater Council on December 11, 2024 ("Hemson Study"). As opposed to the Simcoe MCR which did not assess land needs in the City of Barrie, the Hemson Study considered the joint land needs of the City of Barrie and the Townships of Oro-Medonte and Springwater. It evaluated options for accommodating future growth across these three municipalities and provided conclusions that differ from the MCR. This Background Report concludes that the growth pressures identified in the Hemson Study can help to inform subsequent phases of the project and will be considered in the development of draft growth scenarios.

In addition to this Background Report, subsequent stages of work will include an assessment of local economic drivers and trends that influence growth in the Township of Springwater. Together, these analyses will set the stage for three growth scenarios that will be developed in Phase 2 of the project through Summer and Fall 2025. The preferred growth scenario will align with the planning framework outlined in this Report and will be selected based on an analysis of fiscal impacts, servicing availability, and stakeholder feedback. The preferred scenario will be presented to Council in a Final Recommendations Report at the conclusion of this project in December 2025.

1 Study Overview and Background

1.1 Study Overview

The Township of Springwater is currently undertaking a Growth Management Study to accommodate long-term population and employment growth. The objectives of the GMS are to ensure the Township efficiently and responsibly plans for growth over the long-term to meet the population and employment projections, density targets and intensification targets set forth in the Simcoe County Official Plan and required by the Provincial Planning Statement. On July 5th, 2023, the Township of Springwater passed By-law 2023-075 to adopt a new Official Plan for the Township of Springwater, subject to approval by the County of Simcoe.

The Township's existing Official Plan (adopted in 2023) directs growth to a planning horizon of 2031. The PPS 2024 came into effect on October 20, 2024 and replaced the Provincial Policy Statement ("PPS 2020"). At the same time, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe ("Growth Plan") was repealed, with some policies being carried over into PPS 2024.

Among the changes in the PPS 2024 are policies that allow municipalities to develop their own growth forecasts based on population and employment projections published by the Ministry of Finance. Alternately, municipalities can choose to continue using forecasts previously issued by the Province. The PPS 2024 requires municipalities to make sufficient land available to accommodate growth over a time horizon of at least 20 years, but no more than 30 years. However, planning authorities may plan for employment areas beyond the 30-year horizon.

This Background Report provides an analysis of the current planning policy context and its impact on the GMS. This analysis addresses Bill 185, the PPS 2024, Simcoe County Official Plan and the Springwater Official Plan as well as the implications of repealing the Growth Plan. This analysis will inform the Background Report's multi-disciplinary perspective on the current growth outlook for a time horizon of 30 years.

1.2 Background

In Fall of 2016, the Township of Springwater began their Official Plan Review ("OPR") process. The purpose of the Township's OPR was to reflect the current and emerging values and growth management framework of the Township and ensure it is consistent with Provincial and County policies. Several key studies were initiated to address this requirement. The following section provides a high-level overview of each study, including a summary of the outcomes of the OPR process, and its implications for the upcoming GMS.

1.2.1 Growth Management Strategy, 2018

- Developed in 2018 as Phase 1 of the Official Plan Review Process
- Forecasted population, housing and employment growth to 2031
- Concluded that Springwater had sufficient land to accommodate population and employment growth within existing settlement areas

Phase 1 of the OPR process included the preparation of a Communications Strategy, a Comprehensive Planning Framework Review, a community Visioning Workshop, a Discussion Paper and a Growth Management Strategy Update ("2018 GMS"). The Township retained the professional services of WSP and MetroEconomics to conduct the 2018 GMS, which confirmed that there were sufficient lands designated in the Springwater Official Plan to meet anticipated growth to the year 2031. The 2018 GMS addressed Provincial and County requirements by projecting Springwater's land demand to 2031, reviewing the adequacy of Springwater's designated land supply to accommodate that projected growth, and providing recommendations regarding the growth management framework to be established in the Township's new Official Plan.

WSP's analysis was based on population, housing and employment forecasts to the 2031 planning horizon that were prepared by MetroEconomics. Growth forecasts to 2031 had previously been prepared by the Province in 2012 as part of Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006. The 2012 Provincial forecasts predicted that Springwater would grow to 24,000 people by 2031. However, the 2018 GMS determined that Springwater would grow faster than previously expected due to extra lands being approved in the Midhurst Secondary Plan Area. The 2018 GMS concluded that the population of 24,000 predicted by the Provincial forecasts would be achieved by 2023, and that the Township would reach a total population of 37,800 by 2031.

Regarding residential supply, the 2018 GMS identified a Township-wide settlement area dwelling supply of 12,107 units, which represents the estimated potential to house 37,500 people at full build out. In comparing the projected residential demand to residential supply, it was determined that Springwater had a sufficient number of dwelling units to accommodate projected population forecasts to 2031 within the existing settlement areas.

The 2018 GMS determined that Midhurst and Elmvale should accommodate the majority of residential growth as fully serviced communities. However, it is recognized that growth in Elmvale

is significantly challenged by water table levels and is dependent upon the completion of servicing upgrades. Hillsdale was identified as the next logical settlement area to be considered to accommodate growth pressures in the longer term, subject to appropriate communal/private wastewater servicing systems.

The 2018 GMS also determined that there is sufficient land supply to accommodate projected employment needs to 2031 based on lands designated as non-residential for Employment Serving ("ES") and Population Servicing ("PS") employment uses. This calculation is based on MetroEconomics projections which concluded that total employment would reach 11,800 jobs in the Township by 2031. This represents approximately 6,000 more jobs compared to the Provincial forecasts prepared in 2012 which projected 5,600 jobs in the Township by 2031. Similar to the higher projections for population growth, the 2018 GMS job forecasts accounted for increased development driven by approvals in the Midhurst Secondary Plan Area.

1.2.2 Population-Related Employment Land Market Study, 2021

- Developed as recommended by 2018 GMS to support intensification on non-residential lands
- Concluded that Midhurst and Elmvale provided an adequate supply of population-related employment (P.R.E.) lands to 2031
- The study could not definitively comment on population growth and buildout beyond 2031

Phase 2 of the OPR process required a series of background studies and reports as identified through the Phase 1 work to assist in preparing the new Official Plan. As identified in the 2018 GMS document, WSP recommended that the Township undertake a Population Serving Employment Market Study to support intensification priorities on non-residential lands.

The Township retained the services of Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. ("Watson") to prepare a Population-Related Employment (P.R.E.) Land Market Study ("Watson Study"). The Watson Study assessed if there was an adequate amount of lands designated to accommodate commercial and institutional growth in Springwater to a time horizon of 2031. The purpose of this study was to plan for anticipated P.R.E uses in support of current and future population growth as well as provide direction on locating P.R.E growth in strategic areas.

The Watson Study found that the urban settlement areas of Midhurst and Elmvale provided more than an adequate supply of designated vacant P.R.E lands to 2031. The Study also found that

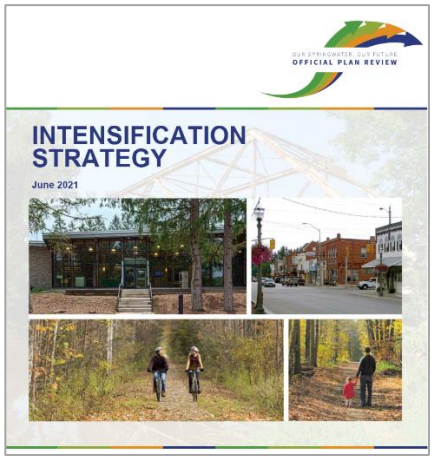
P.R.E. uses could be accommodated within vacant building space in Elmvale and through development on underutilized lands within the Midhurst Bayfield Street Corridor.

The Watson Study noted that the urban settlement areas of Midhurst and Elmvale have sufficient capacity to accommodate 2,150 jobs by 2031 on designated lands in addition to approximately 95 ha of surplus lands. Of the 2,150 jobs, the study found retail and service commercial space would generate an employment increment of 730 employees on approximately 13 ha of lands designated for P.R.E. The remaining P.R.E. of 1,420 employees, comprised of institutional and other commercial uses, would require approximately 47 ha of lands designated for P.R.E. This translates into a density average for P.R.E at 36 jobs per net hectares.

Beyond 2031, designated P.R.E. lands have the potential to accommodate P.R.E. employment growth over an additional 19 to 24 years (i.e. 2031 to 2050 or 2031 to 2055). However, the actual timing of buildout of the P.R.E. land supply would depend on the pace of population growth beyond 2031. The surplus of designated P.R.E. lands is primarily due to the supply of designated lands within Midhurst. The Watson Study found that, in Midhurst, the surplus of P.R.E. lands to 2031 are considered an advantage since a wide range of commercial space is required to support the anticipated population growth to 2031 and at residential buildout. The Watson Study concluded that the supply of P.R.E. lands within Midhurst is sufficient to accommodate demand, as well as to provide market choice of available sites for prospective P.R.E. uses over the next 10 to 20 years.

1.2.3 Intensification Strategy, 2021

- The 2021 Intensification Strategy concluded that Midhurst represents the logical location for intensification in the Township
- The report found that the Bayfield Corridor is of particular interest for future intensification initiatives
- The strategy confirmed that an intensification target of 15% was appropriate

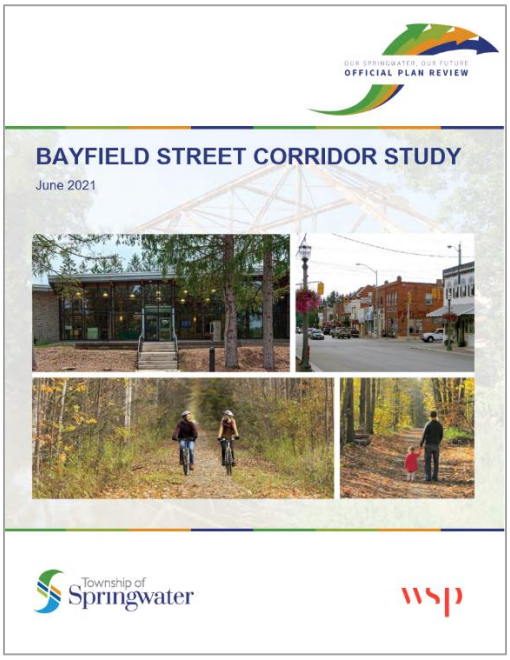


In addition to the Population-Related Employment (P.R.E.) Land Market Study prepared by Watson, the Township retained WSP to prepare an Intensification Strategy ("Intensification Strategy") in June of 2021. The Intensification Strategy undertook a high-level review of the Midhurst and Elmvale settlement areas and concluded that the Midhurst Settlement Area was the logical location to study for additional intensification opportunities, particularly within the Bayfield Corridor.

This Intensification Strategy also updated the residential intensification supply and analysis initially prepared for the 2018 GMS in support of Phase 2 of the OPR process. Based on the 2018 GMS, the minimum intensification target of 15%. Meeting this target would require approximately 777 dwelling units in built-up areas. The Intensification Strategy affirmed the 2018 GMS conclusions, and that Springwater has sufficient intensification supply to meet its intensification target of 15% (as set out by the Simcoe County Official Plan 2016) by 2031.

1.2.4 Bayfield Street Corridor Study, 2021

- Provided direction and guidance for intensification along Bayfield Corridor informed through the 2021 Intensification Strategy
- Identified a vision for the Bayfield Corridor to develop into a focal point for Midhurst
- Provided design recommendations to achieve desired built form along Bayfield Street N.
- Resulted in approximately 1,800 residential units, 3,400 persons and 42,000 sq. m. of retail and commercial space with a potential for 690 new jobs within the Bayfield Street Corridor



As discussed in Section 1.2.3, the Bayfield Street Corridor was identified as a strategic location to provide potential intensification opportunities. As such, the Bayfield Street Corridor Study ("Corridor Study") was undertaken by the Township as part of their OPR process.

The study concludes that intensification, in keeping with the Midhurst Secondary Plan, will be achieved through mixed-use residential and commercial uses and specific urban design guidelines. The Corridor Study includes a proposed vision for the Bayfield Street Corridor that builds on the mixed-use corridor uses referenced in the Midhurst Secondary Plan. The Bayfield Street Corridor is envisioned to provide a new focal point for the Midhurst community and a destination for the Township as a whole. It will be transformed to provide support for pedestrian and cycling uses and accommodate private vehicles as well as future increased public transit use.

To better understand the diverse character along Bayfield Street and within the Corridor Study Boundary, the Study identified the three (3) Character Areas including Bayfield North (which has 1 sub-area), Bayfield South (1 sub-area) and Bayfield Centre (7 sub-areas).

Based on the development assumptions in the Corridor Study, the conceptual demonstration plans for the sub-areas within the Corridor study boundary resulted in approximately 1,800 residential units, 3,400 persons and 42,000 sq. m. of retail and commercial space with a potential for 690 new jobs within the Bayfield Street Corridor. These are conservative estimates based on a conceptual four-storey massing. Should the Corridor be developed with six-storey mixed use buildings with below grade parking and a more typical retail job calculation of 1 job per 30 square metres, the potential development yield could be 2800 to 2900 residential units, accommodating 5,200 to 5,400 persons and providing up to 1,450 new jobs.

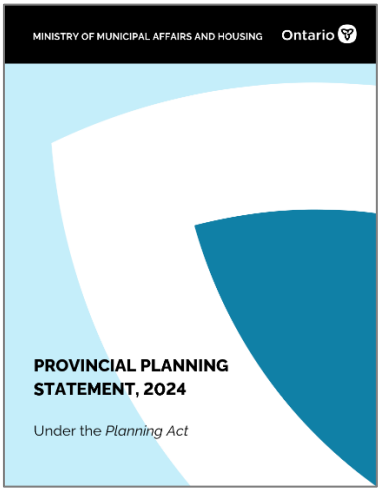
2 Planning Policy Framework

Since the adoption of Springwater's new Official Plan in 2023, there have been several changes to provincial and regional planning frameworks. The Ontario Government published the new PPS 2024 on October 20, 2024, while also repealing the Growth Plan and the PPS, 2020. Several Growth Plan policies were carried forward in the new PPS 2024. Relevant changes, as they apply to Springwater and the current GMS, are reflected below.

2.1 Provincial Planning Statement, 2024

Key Growth Management Changes in PPS 2024

- Removed the concept of 'Comprehensive Review'
    - Settlement Area Boundary Expansions and Employment Land Conversions can now occur at any time
- Population and employment growth forecasts will be based on Ministry of Finance projections as opposed to Growth Plan



2.1.1 Complete Communities

The new PPS 2024 directs municipalities to provide an appropriate housing supply and promote economic development and competitiveness. **Policy 2.1.6** of the PPS 2024 supports this vision for Ontario cities by encouraging planning authorities to consider *complete communities*, a new defined term.

As Springwater continues to experience unprecedented population and employment growth, **Policy 2.1.6** should be used as a guide of how growth should be managed. This includes planning for an appropriate range and mix of land uses, housing options, transportation options, employment, public service facilities and other institutional uses, recreation, parks and open

space and other uses to meet long-term needs. The policies outlined below speak to the direction to be taken by Springwater that is specific to managing growth.

2.1.2 Settlement Areas and Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

The PPS 2024 includes significant changes, modifications and additions to previous policies in relation to settlement areas and settlement area boundary expansions ("SABE"). For example, **Policy 2.3.1.4** now requires (instead of encourages) planning authorities to establish minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment. **Policy 2.3.1.5** has also been modified to *encourage* (but not *require*) planning authorities to establish density targets for *designated growth areas* (rather than *settlement areas*). *Designated growth areas* are defined as:

> ... lands within *settlement areas* designated for growth or lands added to *settlement areas* that have not yet been fully developed. *Designated growth areas* include lands which are designated and available for residential growth in accordance with policy 2.1.4.a), as well as lands required for employment and other uses.

New **Policy 2.3.1.6** directs planning authorities to establish and implement phasing policies within *designated growth areas* to ensure the timely provision of *infrastructure* and *public service facilities*. In addition, new Policy 2.3.2.2 provides that planning authorities may identify a new *settlement area* only where it has been demonstrated that appropriate *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* is planned or available to support *development*.

The Municipal Comprehensive Review ("MCR") has also been removed as a requirement for boundary expansion or establishment of new settlement areas. Notwithstanding this change, when considering a SABE or new settlement area, municipalities must consider criteria including need for additional land to accommodate growth, impacts on the agricultural system, servicing capacity, and phased progression of growth. In addition, consideration of a SABE or new settlement area can occur at any time, unlike previous policies which directed both exercises to occur at the time of an MCR. Moreover, a SABE or new settlement area can now occur through a privately initiated Official Plan Amendment.

While municipalities must consider the "need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses" when identifying new settlement areas or expanding boundaries, they are no longer required to demonstrate that the growth accommodated in a new settlement area or by expanding a boundary cannot be accommodated in the existing settlement area boundary.

2.1.3 Growth Forecasting

As per **Policy 2.1.2** and **Policy 2.1.1**, population and employment growth forecasts can consider the Ministry of Finance projections, rather than the forecasts previously provided through the Growth Plan. However, municipalities can continue to use existing Growth Plan forecasts. Unlike

the PPS 2020, which directed municipalities to make sufficient land available to meet projected needs for "up to 25 years," the PPS 2024 provides that municipalities must use a planning horizon of at least 20 years but not more than 30 years. However, planning for employment areas may extend beyond this time horizon.

2.1.4 Strategic Growth Areas

Strategic Growth Areas ("SGAs") are a Growth Plan concept that has been carried into the PPS 2024. SGAs are areas that have been identified in a municipality's Official Plan for accommodating significant growth and higher-density mixed uses and may have a minimum density target applied to them. As per **Policy 2.4.1.1** planning authorities are now encouraged to identify and focus growth and development in *strategic growth areas*.

The PPS 2024 provides general policies (**Policy 2.4.1)** for *strategic growth areas* that focus on achieving *complete communities*, a range and mix of *housing options*, intensification and mixed-use development. A new policy (Policy 2.4.1.3) provides that within *strategic growth areas,* planning authorities should prioritize planning and investment for *infrastructure* and *public service facilities*; identify the appropriate scale and type of development, and the transition of built form to adjacent areas; permit *development* and *intensification* to achieve *complete communities* and *compact built form*; consider a student housing strategy when planning for SGAs, and; support redevelopment of commercially designated retail lands such as underutilized shopping malls and plazas to support mixed-use residential development.

2.1.5 Housing

As did the PPS 2020, the PPS 2024 includes policies to require minimum targets for *affordable* housing for *low and moderate-income households*. The PPS 2024 re-introduces *low and moderate income households* as a defined term (with slight modifications from the PPS 2020 definition). This policy requires Service Managers to address the full range of *housing options*, including *affordable* housing. *Affordable* is defined as:

a) in the case of ownership housing, the least expensive of:
    1. housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for *low and moderate income* households; or
    2. housing for which the purchase price is at least 10 percent below the average purchase price of a resale unit in the municipality;
b) in the case of rental housing, the least expensive of:
    1. a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for *low and moderate income* households; or
    2. a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the municipality.

Policy 2.2.1(a) re-introduces the requirement from the PPS 2020 that planning authorities establish and implement minimum targets for the provision of housing that is *affordable* for *low- and moderate-income households*.

Policy 2.2.1(b) continues to require planning authorities to permit and facilitate the *development* and *redevelopment* of underutilized commercial and institutional sites for residential development. Additional references to the development of underutilized shopping malls and plazas have been incorporated into other sections of the PPS 2024 (**Policy 2.4.1.3 e**). This policy continues to promote the introduction of new *housing options* within previously developed areas and *redevelopment* which results in a net increase in residential units.

Policy 2.2.1(c) promotes density for new housing which efficiently use land, resources, *infrastructure* and *public service facilities*, and *active transportation*.

2.1.6 Employment

The PPS 2024 provides a new definition of *employment* areas which does not include institutional or commercial uses (including retail and office uses), other than those associated with manufacturing and warehouse uses.

> **Employment area***:* means those areas designated in an official plan for clusters of business and economic activities including manufacturing, research and development in connection with manufacturing, warehousing, goods movement, associated retail and office, and ancillary facilities. An *employment area* also includes areas of land described by subsection 1(1.1) of the *Planning Act*. Uses that are excluded from *employment areas* are institutional and commercial, including retail and office not associated with the primary employment use listed above.

Also, the MCR has been removed as a requirement for conversion of lands in *employment areas*. Notwithstanding this change, the conversion of employment lands is subject to the same criteria as the previous PPS 2020.

Policy 2.8.1.1(e) is a new policy which requires planning authorities to promote economic development and competitiveness by addressing land use compatibility adjacent to *employment areas* by providing an appropriate transition to *sensitive land uses*.

For lands outside of *employment areas* and within SGAs and other mixed use areas where frequent transit service is available, **Policy 2.8.1.2** encourages the development of industrial, manufacturing and small-scale warehousing uses that can be operated adjacent to *sensitive land uses* without causing *adverse effects*.

Policy 2.8.1.3 states that "on lands within 300 metres of *employment areas, development* shall avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate potential impacts on the long-

term economic viability of employment uses within existing or planned *employment areas,* in accordance with provincial guidelines."

Another noteworthy change is the removal of the PPS 2020 policy requiring separation of or mitigation for *sensitive land uses* within *employment areas* planned for industrial and manufacturing uses. Instead, **Policy 2.8.2.4** requires planning authorities, when planning for *employment areas*, to "maintain land use compatibility between *sensitive land uses* and *employment areas*" in accordance with the land use compatibility policies contained in **Policy 3.5.1**, "to maintain the long-term operational and economic viability of the planned uses and function of these areas."

Policy 2.8.2.5 significantly modifies the PPS 2020 policies related to the removal of lands from *employment areas,* commonly known as an "employment conversion." The PPS 2024 permits planning authorities to remove lands from *employment areas* at any time (rather than through an MCR), only where it has been demonstrated that:

a) there is an identified need for the removal and the land is not required for *employment area* uses over the long term;
b) the proposed uses would not negatively impact the overall viability of the *employment area* by:
    1. avoiding, or where avoidance is not possible, minimizing and mitigating potential impacts to existing or planned *employment area* uses in accordance with policy 3.5;
    2. maintaining access to *major goods movement facilities and corridors;*
c) existing or planned *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* are available to accommodate the proposed uses; and
d) the municipality has sufficient employment lands to accommodate projected employment growth to the horizon of the approved official plan.

The Provincially Significant Employment Zones identified in the Growth Plan are not carried forward into the PPS 2024.

2.1.7 Infrastructure and Facilities

Policy 3.1.1 requires planning authorities to provide infrastructure and public services facilities in an efficient manner while accommodating projected needs. However, notwithstanding **Policy 3.1.1**, before consideration is given to developing new infrastructure and public service facilities, **Policy 3.1.2** requires the use of the existing network and system of infrastructure and public service facilities to be optimized and re-used where feasible.

2.1.8 Sewage, Water and Stormwater

Changes to planning for sewage, water and stormwater are consistent with previous versions of the PPS 2020 apart from **Policy 3.6.1 (e)**. This policy requires planning authorities to consider

allocating or re-allocating unused system capacity for municipal water and sewage services for the purpose of meeting current and projected needs for increased housing supply. It is assumed that **Policy 3.6.1 (e)** increases likelihood for housing to be built in underserviced areas through reallocation of unused system capacity in other areas.

2.1.9 Natural Heritage and Water Resources

There is no change to the Natural Heritage policies from PPS 2020 to PPS 2024.

The following PPS 2024 policy has been included for reference:

Policy 4.2.3 encourages municipalities to undertake *watershed planning* to inform planning for *sewage and water services* and stormwater management, including *low impact development*, and the protection, improvement or restoration of the *quality and quantity of water*.

2.1.10 Agriculture

As per **Policy 4.3.1,** the PPS 2024 now *requires* (instead of *encourages*) planning authorities to use an *agricultural system* approach, based on provincial guidance, to maintain and enhance a geographically continuous agricultural land base and support and foster the long-term economic prosperity and productive capacity of the *agri-food network*.

The PPS 2024 still requires *agricultural areas* and *specialty crop areas* to be designated and protected for long-term use for agriculture. However, as set out below, it will be easier under the PPS 2024 to establish more housing within *prime agricultural areas*.

Policy 4.3.2.4 permits a principal dwelling associated with an agricultural operation to be located in *prime agricultural areas* as an agricultural use, in accordance with provincial guidance, except where prohibited by policy 4.3.3.3.1(c) (lot creation and adjustments).

Policy 4.3.2.5 provides that where a residential dwelling is permitted on a lot in a *prime agricultural area*, up to two additional residential units shall be permitted in accordance with provincial guidance, provided that specified criteria are met.

Notably, permissions for residential lot creation in prime agricultural areas that were introduced in the 2023 proposed PPS have been removed in the 2024 PPS.

2.2 Bill 97: Helping Homebuyer, Protecting Tenants Act

Bill 97 introduced a new definition for "area of employment" under subsection 1 (1) and a related transition provision under subsections 1 (1.1) and (1.2) of the *Planning Act*. The definition of “area of employment” has been amended to narrow the scope of uses that are permitted in these areas. Under the amended definition, manufacturing uses, warehousing uses (including uses related to the movement of goods), and research and development in connection with manufacturing are the primary uses permitted within an “area of employment.” Commercial uses, including stand-

alone retail and stand-alone office uses, and institutional uses (e.g., schools and day cares) have been explicitly identified as not permitted within an “area of employment”. Employment areas are still subject to the same conversion criteria as under the previous framework; however, conversions may occur at any time, irrespective of an MCR.

This definition change has created the need to revisit Springwater’s existing employment areas and to re-evaluate the total quantum of employment land that is available for growth to 2051. This evaluation will be conducted in conjunction with Watson & Associates Economists.

2.3 Bill 23 and Bill 185: *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 & Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*

Under Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, the *Planning Act* was amended to remove most planning responsibilities from upper-tier municipalities. Specifically, Bill 23 distinguished between an *upper-tier municipality with planning responsibilities* and an *upper-tier municipality without planning responsibilities* and removed the requirement for certain municipalities previously known as "upper-tier municipalities," to approve official plans and official plan amendments of their lower-tier municipalities. This new framework came into force on July 1, 2024; however, the definition of “upper-tier municipality without planning responsibilities” was modified prior to coming into force by *Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024* (Bill 185). Relevant to the Township of Springwater, the County of Simcoe will become an upper-tier municipality without planning authorities at a future time.

When the County of Simcoe becomes an upper-tier municipality without planning authority, new pressures will be brought to bear on the Township of Springwater. This Growth Management Strategy will consider the County’s current approach to managing growth and will also evaluate potential future impacts related to the revised planning framework.

2.4 County of Simcoe Official Plan

The Township of Springwater is a *local municipality* within the County of Simcoe. The County of Simcoe Official Plan (approved between 2013 and 2016; Office Consolidation February 2023) guides local development to ensure safe, healthy, and complete communities. The County Official Plan states that it is within the Plan area of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. 2006 (2006 Growth Plan). When the County of Simcoe becomes a municipality without planning responsibilities, the responsibility for growth forecasting will shift to local municipalities.

2.5 County of Simcoe Official Plan Amendment 7

In August 2022 the County of Simcoe adopted Official Plan Amendment No. 7 (SCOPA 7) by By-law No. 6977. The SCOPA 7 amendment included updates to growth management policies to align with the Growth Plan 2020 and the PPS 2020. SCOPA 7 forecasted population and employment

growth to 2051 in the County of Simcoe and provided updated policies on settlement hierarchies. SCOPA 7 also addresses population and employment growth forecasts, density and intensification targets, and the identification of Major Transit Station Areas. Additionally, it establishes policy frameworks for managing new growth areas and future settlement boundary expansions. As SCOPA 7 has not yet been approved by MMAH, it is not yet in force and effect.

This Growth Management Study will review and build upon the technical work that was completed in support of SCOPA 7. However, planning direction could result in the need to modify the conclusions regarding intensification, growth and density in Springwater if there are significant modifications to SCOPA 7 when it is approved by MMAH.

2.5.1 Growth Forecasting

Per **Policy 3.2.1** the population of Simcoe County is expected to increase by 194,340 people between 2021 and 2051 and employment is expected to increase by 81,380 during this same time period**.** Of the expected growth in the County of Simcoe, 10,170 people and 2,490 jobs are allocated to Springwater by 2051.

A hierarchy of settlement areas and rural settlements is defined for the municipalities within the County of Simcoe that are based on delineated built boundaries and availability of municipal servicing. Category 1 represents Settlement Areas that are the primary targets for growth and intensification. Category 2 are also serviced Settlement Areas, but not primary targets for growth. At the other end of the spectrum, Category 4 represents rural settlements that have either no municipal servicing or partial services. These are not intended to accommodate significant growth the horizon year. The following areas within Springwater have been delineated by SCOPA 7:

- Midhurst –Category 2
- Elmvale Category 2
- Centre Vespra – Category 3
- Hillsdale – Category 3
- Snow Valley – Category 3
- Anten Mills – Category 4
- Minesing – Category 4
- Phelpston – Category 4

Apart from the growth allocated to Category 1 settlement areas, SCOPA 7's **Policy 3.2.2 (b)** allocates the majority of remaining growth to Category 2 settlement areas.

2.5.2 Density and Intensification

SCOPA 7 requires a minimum of 35% per cent of all residential development occurring annually in the County of Simcoe to occur within delineated built-up areas. To achieve the 35% intensification

target, Springwater is directed to meet an intensification target of 15% in delineated built-up areas (Figure 1).

INTENSIFICATION TARGETS FOR LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES WITH DELINEATED BUILT-UP AREAS

Local Municipality	Intensification Target
Bradford West Gwillimbury	42%
Clearview	30%
Collingwood	50%
Essa	30%
Innisfil	30%
Midland	50%
New Tecumseth	37%
Penetanguishene	50%
Severn	20%
Springwater	15%
Tay	20%
Wasaga Beach	50%
Simcoe County	**35%**

Figure 1 SCOPA 7 Intensification Targets for Local Municipalities

SCOPA 7 directs local municipalities in Simcoe County to plan for density targets set out in **Policy 3.2.7**. Accordingly, SCOPA 7 includes a policy which directs for development on Designated Greenfield Areas to be planned to achieve a minimum density target of residents and jobs combined per hectare. Springwater is to achieve a density target in Designated Greenfield Areas of 45 residents and jobs combined per hectare (Figure 2). In cases where development is proposed in a designated greenfield area, it shall be demonstrated through a secondary plan or other comprehensive planning process that the proposed development meets the criteria of **Policy 3.2.7 (d)**. In addition, it is required that all local municipalities with designated greenfield areas shall prepare phasing plans in their local Official Plans.

DESIGNATED GREENFIELD AREA DENSITY TARGETS FOR LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

Local Municipality	*Designated Greenfield Area* Density Target (Residents and Jobs Combined per Hectare)
Bradford West Gwillimbury	55
Clearview	45
Collingwood	55
Essa	45
Innisfil	55
Midland	55
New Tecumseth	55
Penetanguishene	55
Severn	45
Springwater	45
Tay	45
Wasaga Beach	55
Simcoe County	**51**

Figure 2: Designated Greenfield Area Density Targets for Local Municipalities

We note that if Simcoe County loses its planning authority as a result of Bill 185, Springwater could choose to adopt the targets found in SCOPA 7 but will have greater flexibility to establish targets for growth areas and future settlement expansions. In the interim, the current targets in the Springwater Official Plan 2023 would continue to apply.

The PPS 2024 clarifies that strategic and designated growth areas are not land use designations and do not alter existing ones. Development within these areas remains subject to existing provincial and municipal planning policies and approval processes.

2.6 Springwater Official Plan (2023)

Highlights of Springwater Official Plan 2023

- Intensification Target remains unchanged at 15%
- Midhurst and Elmvale will be key destinations for future growth
- Three new neighbourhoods are identified in the Midhurst Secondary Plan

On July 5, 2023 the Township of Springwater passed By-law 2023-075 to adopt a new Official Plan for the Township of Springwater. In its current version, the Springwater Official Plan (OP) draws direction from the Simcoe County Official Plan (approved December 29, 2016) and the 2018 GMS. As such, the current Official Plan plans for growth to a time horizon by 2031.

Notwithstanding this time horizon, Midhurst remains the focal point where new development and anticipated growth for commercial and residential uses is to occur. Following direction in the OP to accommodate the majority of growth within Major Settlement Areas, Midhurst will be the priority while Elmvale and Hillsdale will take on the remaining allocation of growth. All of these communities currently provide for, or are planned to have, full municipal water and sanitary servicing.

2.6.1 Intensification

The OP's intensification target is consistent with the Simcoe County Official Plan target of 15%. The Township plans for Midhurst and Elmvale to accommodate intensification as they are the only communities in Springwater with delineated built boundaries.

2.6.2 Employment Areas

A majority of Springwater's employment lands that cater to commercial, business, office and retail uses are not in compliance with the definitions of *Employment Areas* provided in the *Planning Act* and the PPS 2024. Notwithstanding these recent changes to the definition of employment areas, the OP is consistent with Council's direction to utilize the close proximity of Highway 400 as an important driver to economic growth.

2.6.3 Midhurst Secondary Plan

The majority of development within the existing Midhurst Secondary Plan area is comprised of single-detached housing. The character and built form of the existing community areas within the Midhurst Secondary Plan area will be protected through transitional buffers of low density housing in proximity to the existing neighbourhood. Further to this, the Secondary Plan promotes sensitive intensification within the Bayfield Street Corridor, with a mixture of uses including higher density forms of housing.

The intersection of Bayfield Street and Snow Valley Road is identified as the major focus for the Midhurst community which is intended for higher order retail and community facility uses. In addition, three new neighbourhoods are identified in the Midhurst Secondary Plan where residential growth will be allocated. OP Schedule A-8: Midhurst Settlement Area Secondary Plan identifies these neighbourhoods in yellow (Figure 3). The three neighbourhoods identified in Schedule A-8 are intended to be the fundamental structural element of the Midhurst Secondary Plan Area and contain a range of residential densities, lot sizes and building types. It is the intention of the Township that development within the three new neighbourhoods achieve an overall gross density of 40 persons and/or employees per hectare, with the highest density allocated along Doran Road at 50 persons and/or employees per hectare. Densities shall also occur adjacent to Carson Road at 40 persons and/or employees per hectare and Pooles Road at 35 persons and/or employees per hectare.

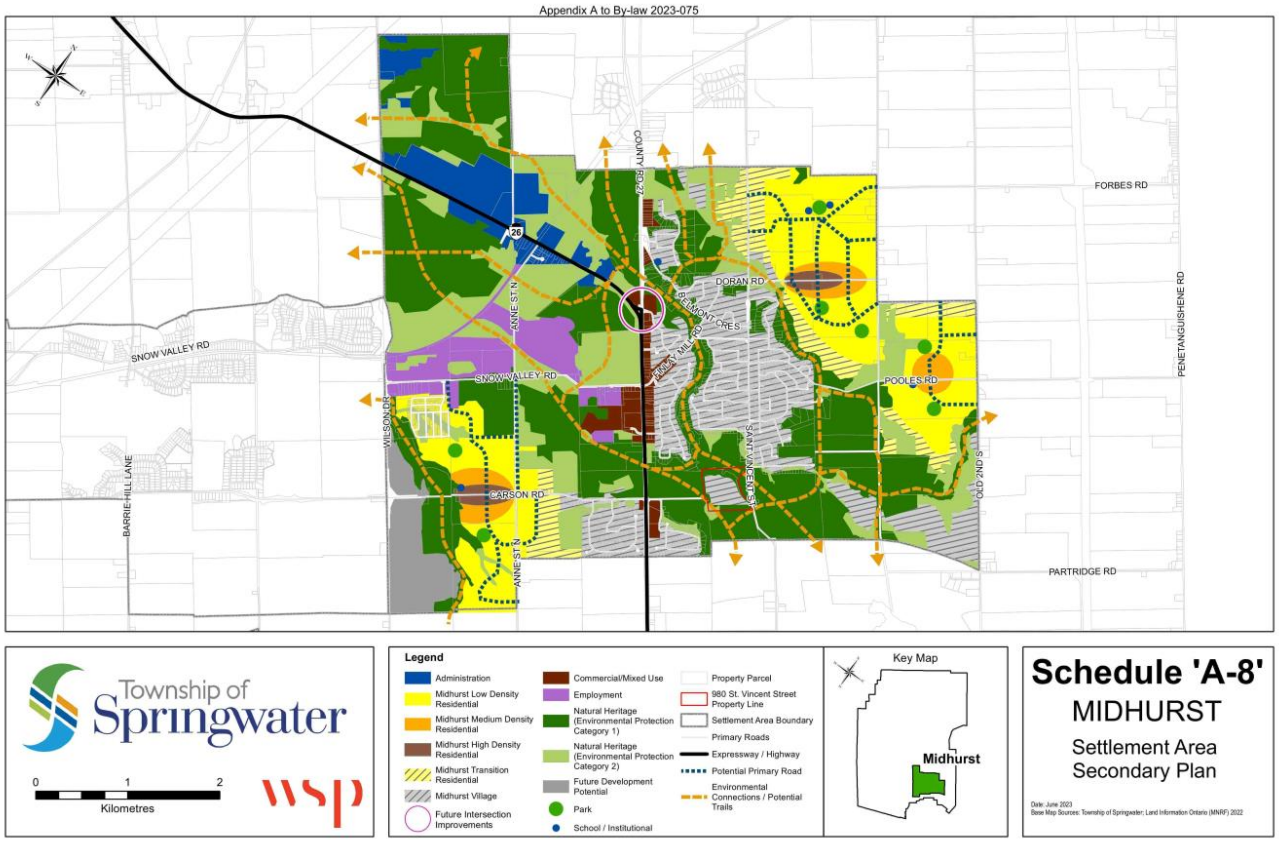


Figure 3 Midhurst Settlement Area Secondary Plan

2.6.4 Elmvale Settlement Area

Elmvale is the only other settlement area within the Township of Springwater that is identified in the OP within the delineated built-up area. As such, **Policy 2.2.1.1 (c)** of the 2023 Official Plan notes that intensification will be prioritized in this community. Elmvale is largely residential with a mixed use main street that contributes greatly to the character of the community. There are employment lands on the northern and western boundaries of the Elmvale Settlement Area. The Elmvale Employment Areas will be evaluated to ensure that they align with the new provincial definition of "employment area". Moreover, all of the employment lands in Elmvale will be evaluated to determine if they can still be counted towards the employment land base for the purpose of land needs assessments. Figure 4 shows the land use plan for Elmvale:

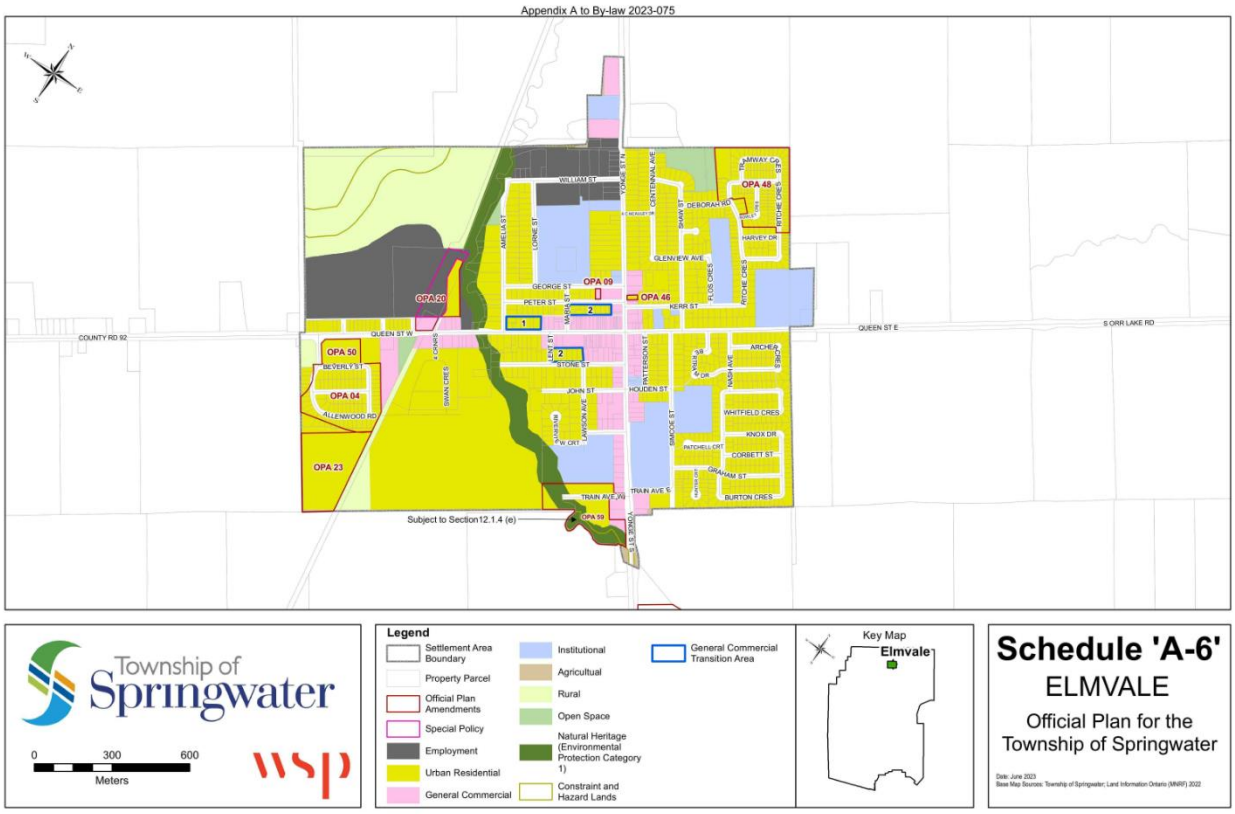


Figure 4 Elmvale Settlement Area Land Use Designations

3.0 Land Needs Analyses

Springwater's Land Needs were assessed in both 2022 and 2024. This section summarizes these previous assessments, which provide a basis for the current analysis.

3.1 Lands Needs Assessments

Land Needs in the County of Simcoe (including Springwater) were assessed in 2022 ("2022 LNA") as part of the County's municipal comprehensive review, and the land needs for the City of Barrie, Township of Oro-Medonte and Springwater were assessed in 2024 as part of a Joint Land Needs Analysis ("Joint LNA").

3.1.1 Simcoe County Growth Allocations and LNA (2022)

The 2022 LNA divided the County into Regional Market Areas (RMAs). Springwater was counted as part of the Northern RMA that is expected to accommodate about 36% of the County's growth to 2051. Within the northern RMA, large urban centres such as Collingwood, Midland, Penetanguishene, and Wasaga Beach were forecast to be the key areas for growth.

2022 MCR Growth Allocations and Land Needs

Figure 5 below shows an excerpt from the County's 2022 Growth Forecasts and Land Needs Assessment:

Table 11 – Simcoe Population Allocations to Lower-Tiers

Municipality	2021	2051	2021-51
Adjala-Tosorontio	11,260	11,970	710
Bradford West Gwillimbury	44,490	83,470	38,980
Essa	23,810	34,740	10,930
Innisfil	44,710	84,450	39,740
New Tecumseth	45,480	80,590	35,110
Clearview	15,220	21,820	6,600
Collingwood	25,470	42,690	17,220
Midland	18,250	24,290	6,040
Oro-Medonte	23,770	26,230	2,460
Penetanguishene	10,340	14,390	4,050
Ramara	10,680	12,870	2,190
Severn	14,750	17,790	3,040
Springwater	22,320	32,490	10,170
Tay	11,410	13,130	1,720
Tiny	13,240	16,010	2,770
Wasaga Beach	25,480	38,090	12,610
Southern RMA	**169,750**	**295,220**	**125,470**
Northern RMA	**190,930**	**259,800**	**68,870**
Simcoe County	**360,680**	**555,020**	**194,340**

Source: Hemson Consulting

Figure 5: Excerpt of Table 11 from County of Simcoe Growth Forecasts and Land Needs Assessment, prepared by Hemson Consulting. March 31, 2022.

We note that Springwater is expected to grow as quickly as the larger urban centres in the northern RMA and will need to accommodate approximately 10,000 new residents by 2051. However, the 2022 land needs analysis concluded that no further community area lands would be needed to accommodate residential growth in Springwater to 2051 (Figure 6).

Table 4 - Summary of Community Area Expansion Land Needs

Municipality	Community Area Expansion Land Needs (developable ha)		
	County LNA Report (March 2022)	Draft OPA (June 2022)	Difference
Adjala-Tosorontio	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bradford West Gwillimbury	502.6	449.1	(53.5)
Essa	134.8	134.8	0.0
Innisfil	70.2	104.2	34.0
New Tecumseth	448.4	448.4	0.0
Clearview	0.0	0.0	0.0
Collingwood	0.0	0.0	0.0
Midland	0.0	0.0	0.0
Oro-Medonte	0.0	0.0	0.0
Penetanguishene	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ramara	0.0	0.0	0.0
Severn	0.0	0.0	0.0
Springwater	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tay	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tiny	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wasaga Beach	0.0	0.0	0.0
Southern RMA	**1,156.0**	**1,136.4**	**(19.5)**
Northern RMA	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
County	**1,156.0**	**1,136.4**	**(19.5)**

Source: Hemson Consulting

Figure 6: Excerpt of Table 4 from Revised County of Simcoe Growth Forecasts and Land Needs Assessment, prepared by Hemson Consulting. May 31, 2022.

Similarly, the 2022 LNA concluded that there is no need for additional employment lands in the Township of Springwater to 2051.

2024 Simcoe County Census Division – MOF Projections

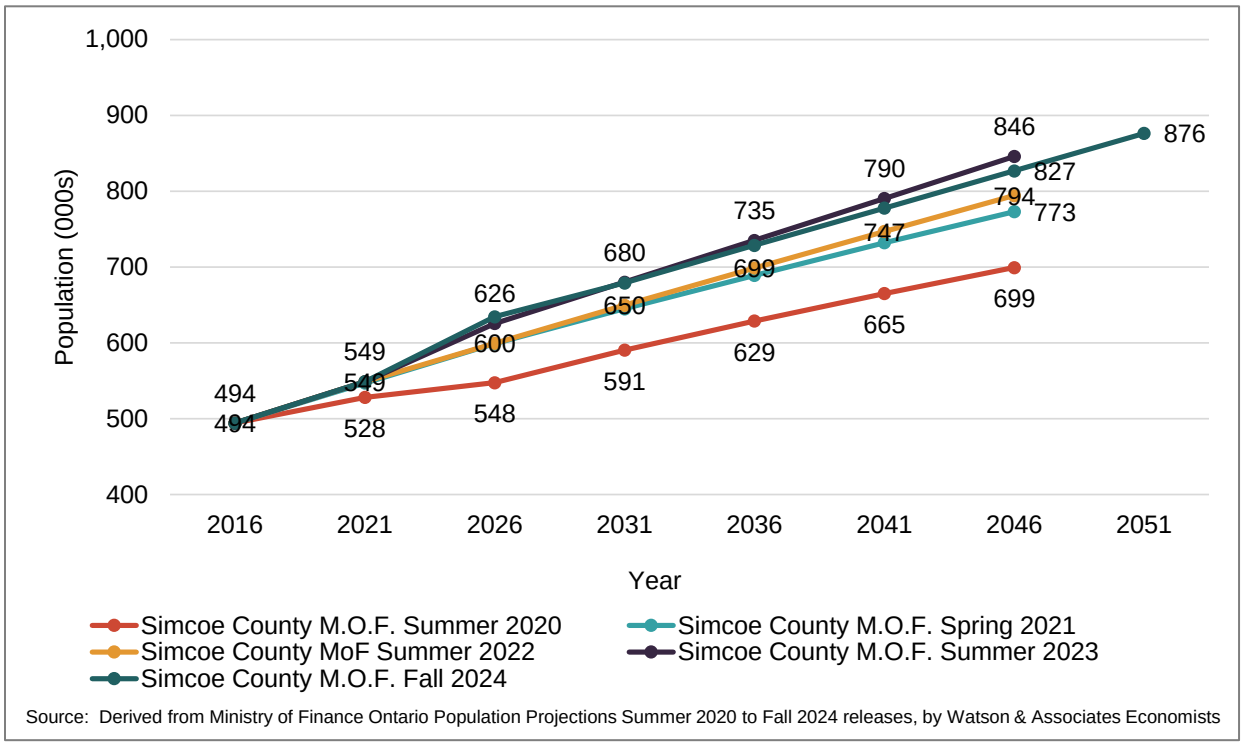
According to the Ministry of Finance population projections from 2020 to 2023, the long-term population forecast (to 2046) for the Simcoe County Census Division increased from 699,000 to

846,000 (Figure 6). A similar trend has been observed in the growth forecast outlook for the Province as a whole.

However, the most recent 2024 MOF projection decreased the growth outlook for the Simcoe Census Division slightly to 827,000 by 2046 (Figure 7). MOF's 2024 projections for the Simcoe Census Division are forecast at an annual growth rate of 1.6% between 2021 and 2051, or an increase of about 328,000 people over 30 years.

Schedule 3 of the 2020 Growth Plan forecast for the Census Division, which formed a basis for SCOPA 7, estimates a higher growth forecast for the County as a whole. By 2051, the Census Division is forecast to reach a population of 902,000, according to the 2020 Growth Plan, compared to 876,000 in the 2024 MOF forecast.

The discrepancy between the 2022 land needs analysis (which formed the basis of SCOPA 7) and the 2024 MOF projection is likely due to differences in methodology or assumptions.



Source: Derived from Ministry of Finance Ontario Population Projections Summer 2020 to Fall 2024 releases, by Watson & Associates Economists

Figure 7 Simcoe County Census Division (includes the City of Barrie and City of Orillia)
Ministry of Finance Growth Forecast Comparison, 2020 to 2024

3.1.2 Joint Land Needs Analysis (2024)

At a Special Meeting held on December 11, 2024, Springwater Council received a presentation from Hemson Consulting regarding the Joint Land Needs Analysis and Study. The Joint LNA evaluates community area and employment area land needs for the City of Barrie, Township of Oro-Medonte and Springwater. This analysis considers growth forecasting and the ability for each municipality to absorb residential and employment growth to a time horizon of 2051. The Joint

LNA identified a need for Springwater to plan for additional employment lands to maintain balanced community development if the Midhurst Secondary Plan area absorbs accelerated housing growth from the regional market area. Below is a summary of the Community Area and Employment Area land needs from the 2024 assessment.

Community Area Land Need

In line with the conclusions of the 2022 LNA, the Joint LNA confirmed that the Township of Springwater had a surplus of designated Community Area lands, comprised both of lands that are currently the subject of development applications and vacant lands without applications. Figure 8 is taken from the 2024 Joint LNA report, and it shows that Springwater can accommodate more than 11,000 units on its designated Community Area lands.

Table 9: Springwater Community Area DGA Land Supply (2021)

Supply Potential	Single/Semi	Row	Apartment	Total
In planning process	4,740	1,270	80	6,090
Vacant land (no applications)	3,910	1,050	70	5,020
Total	**8,640**	**2,320**	**150**	**11,120**

Source: Simcoe County MCR

Figure 8: Excerpt showing Table 9 of the Joint Land Needs Analysis and Study – Summary of Stage 2 Findings. Prepared by Hemson Consulting. December 6, 2024.

Employment Area Land Need

The 2024 Joint LNA concluded that the Township has 55 hectares of vacant Employment Area land, which is projected to be fully developed at low urban densities (20 jobs per hectare or 1,100 jobs) by 2051. Employment in existing settlement areas primarily focuses on agricultural, aggregates, small scale manufacturing, construction and, in some areas, tourism and recreation. We note that some of the uses included in Employment Areas in the Joint LNA do not meet the new definition of Employment Area uses as discussed above. Additionally, employment lands outside of Midhurst and Elmvale do not have existing or planned servicing for industrial or commercial uses.

The Joint LNA provides an assessment of the City of Barrie's proposal to adjust its urban boundary to include lands in Springwater as an option to address the City's employment land needs. It presents multiple options for addressing future land needs, and it recognizes the value of lands adjacent to Highway 400 as key locations for future employment areas. Moreover, it notes that the potential for rapid housing growth in Midhurst could necessitate the designation of additional employment lands. Detailed analysis of potential locations for growth will be completed in the next phase of the Growth Management Study as the growth scenarios are developed.

Table 6: Springwater Employment Area Supply-Demand Summary

Long-Term Land Supply (ha)	55.0
Total Land Supply (ha)	55.0
Assumed Employment Land Density (jobs/ha)	20
Employment Land Capacity (jobs)	1,100
Employment Land Employment Growth, 2021 - 2051 (jobs)	1,101
Sufficiency of Supply (ha)	(0.1)

Source: Simcoe County MCR

Figure 8: Excerpt showing Table 6 of the Joint Land Needs Analysis and Study – Summary of Stage 2 Findings. Prepared by Hemson Consulting. December 6, 2024.

In its analysis of Springwater, the Joint LNA concludes that:

> The Midhurst Secondary Plan Area is planned to be a complete community that will integrate residential, commercial, institutional, and employment uses, with a projected population of approximately 29,000 at full build out.

It will be important to ensure that growth in Midhurst continues to balance residential / community lands with employment lands that can drive opportunities for job growth. The Joint LNA recommends that the Township expedite the designation of additional employment lands to address a potential shortfall. The Joint LNA notes that this will support the creation of complete communities which balance residential and employment opportunities.

4.0 Additional Land Needs Analysis

Existing planning policies direct the Township of Springwater to accommodate long-term residential and non-residential growth within its current settlement areas. As directed by the Simcoe County Official Plan and the Springwater Official Plan, the majority of population and employment growth will be allocated to Midhurst, with Elmvale and Hillsdale absorbing a smaller portion of growth.

The Midhurst Secondary Plan Area is planned to be the focal point for anticipated growth in the Township. A high-level analysis suggests that lands east of the Midhurst Secondary Plan Area are the most logical location to designate additional employment lands. This is due to the close proximity of Highway 400, which will connect the southern regional market area of Simcoe County to Springwater. This area is well positioned to take advantage of the highway ramp at Forbes Road and provide businesses with access to a major goods movement corridor. Recent growth in employment lands jobs throughout Ontario has been driven by businesses focused on

warehousing, logistics, and goods movement. These sectors require large parcels of land, and they are best able to leverage a location with easy highway access.

The addition of employment lands adjacent to Highway 400 would require the Township to expand the Midhurst Settlement Area Boundary. The existing boundaries of the Midhurst Settlement Area are shown in Figure 9, and a Settlement Area Boundary Expansion would need to be undertaken in accordance with Provincial criteria. This would include demonstrating the need for additional lands through a future land needs assessment.

As part of the Growth Management Strategy, the project team will further analyze the total land area that could be required for an expansion. The land needs assessment will consider the development potential of lands currently designated for employment uses. Currently designated lands which are not feasible for development (e.g., due to natural heritage constraints) will not be counted as part of the Township's employment land base. This evaluation will allow the Township to better understand if more developable employment lands need to be added to the Settlement Areas.

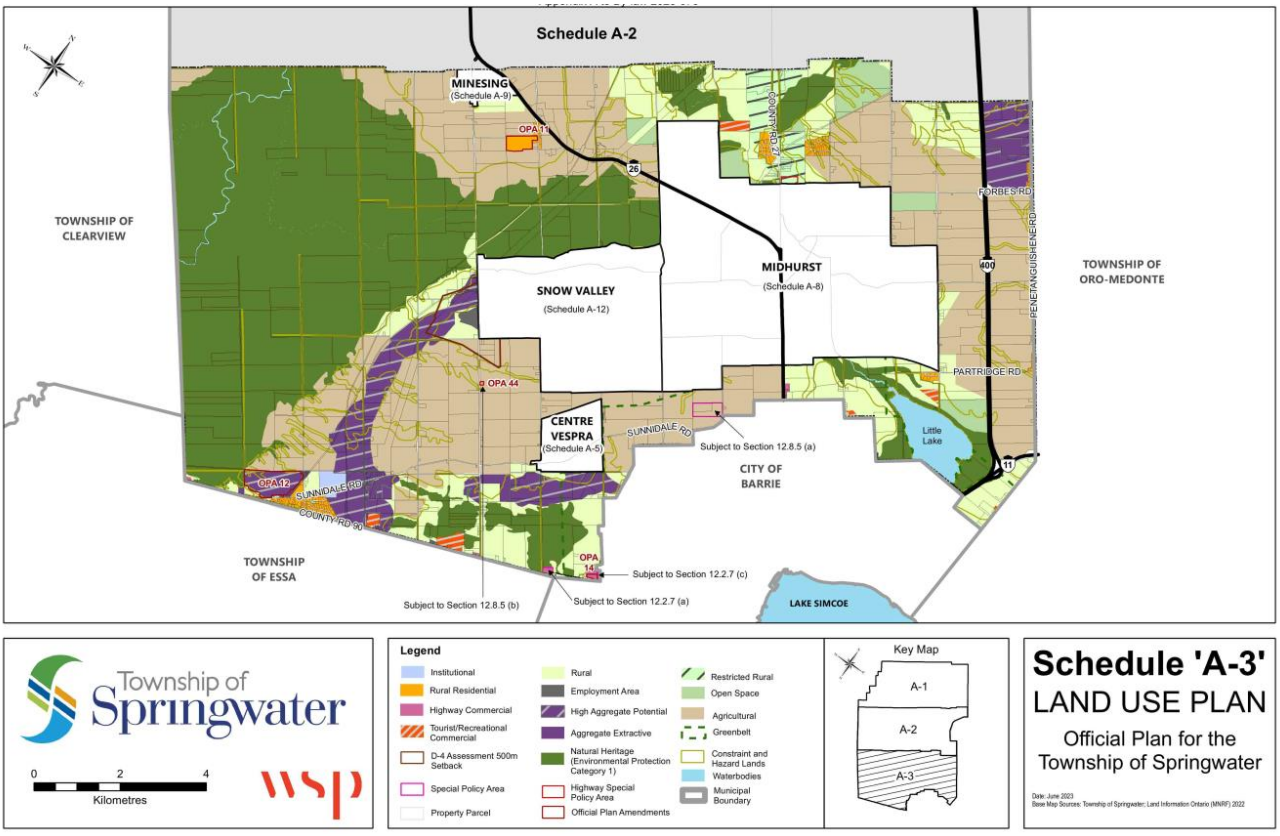


Figure 9 Southern Springwater – Land Use Plan

5 Conclusion

This Background Report has been prepared as part of Phase 1 of the GMS. It summarizes the existing planning framework and recent changes to Provincial planning policy and legislation, including the new PPS 2024. It reviews the forecasts and allocations prepared for the Simcoe County Municipal Comprehensive Review, and the direction contained in Simcoe County Official Plan Amendment 7 (SCOPA 7). Finally, this Background Report reviews the Joint Land Needs Analysis and Study that was prepared by Hemson Consulting and received by Springwater Council on December 11, 2024. This Report concludes that the growth pressures identified in the December 2024 Joint LNA can help to inform subsequent phases of the project and will be considered in the development of draft growth scenarios.

Further stages of work include an assessment of local economic drivers and trends that influence growth in the Township of Springwater. Together, these analyses will inform the development of three growth scenarios in Phase 2 of the project through Summer and Fall 2025. In addition to aligning with the planning framework outlined in this Report, the preferred growth scenario will be selected based on an analysis of fiscal impacts, servicing availability, and stakeholder feedback. This will be presented to Council in a Final Recommendations Report at the conclusion of this project in December 2025.