



# Growth Management Study

## Final Recommendation Report

February 2026

## Executive Summary

The Township of Springwater has retained WSP Canada Inc. to conduct a Growth Management Study (GMS) that recommends a preferred growth scenario to guide population and employment growth to 2056. To complete the study, WSP assembled a team that includes Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., as well as a multidisciplinary group of land use planners and engineers. The growth management framework is required to implement direction from both the Province and the County of Simcoe, while aligning with the Township's strategic priorities.

The updated growth forecasts indicate that the Township will grow by 11,000 people between 2021 and 2056. Springwater is expected to reach a population of 32,490 by 2051 (as also projected by Simcoe County Official Plan Amendment 7) and 33,670 by 2056. This population growth is forecast to be accompanied by 2,820 new jobs between 2021 and 2056, driven by employment in a variety of sectors including healthcare and social assistance, education services, transportation and warehousing, construction, and manufacturing.

While the GMS identifies a surplus of community lands capable of accommodating the forecasted residential growth, the study identifies a need for additional employment lands by 2056. To address this deficit and ensure the long-term availability of strategically located employment lands, the study recommends the expansion of the Midhurst Settlement Area eastward towards Highway 400. The recommended location is centred around the existing and planned infrastructure, including the interchange of Highway 400 and Forbes Road. These lands represent a valuable location for accommodating industrial, logistics, warehousing, and other employment uses that rely on efficient highway access.

The recommendations within this study are consistent with the policies of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 and are supported by a high-level analysis of agricultural impacts, servicing options, as well as a fiscal impact analysis. The conclusion of the Growth Management Study positions Springwater to accommodate future residential and employment needs while ensuring long-term economic competitiveness and the development of complete communities. Upon endorsement of the study recommendations, the project team will initiate the Official Plan Amendment, including launching the public engagement process and drafting the Official Plan Amendment policies. This amendment will implement the findings and bring the recommended lands into the settlement area and ensure overall Official Plan conformity to the 2056 Planning horizon.

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# 1 Study Overview and Background

## 1.1 Study Overview

The Township of Springwater is currently undertaking a Growth Management Study (“GMS”) to consider and accommodate long-term population and employment growth. The objective of the GMS is to ensure the Township efficiently and responsibly plans for long-term growth. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the Township of Springwater passed By-law 2023-075 to adopt a new Official Plan for the Township of Springwater (“OP2031”), which implemented population, housing and employment forecasts to the year 2031. As of the date of this report, the Official Plan has not been approved by the County of Simcoe and is not in-effect. The Township has undertaken this GMS to conform to County of Simcoe’s Official Plan Amendment #7 (“SCOPA 7”), ensure conformity with updated Provincial legislation, and to extend the Township’s planning horizon to 2056 for the County’s consideration.

## 1.2 Background

In the 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 its consistency with Provincial and County policies. Several key studies were initiated to address this requirement, including a previous GMS (2018), a Population-Related Employment Land Market Study (2021), an Intensification Strategy (2021), the Bayfield Street Corridor Study (2021), and a Land Needs Analysis (2022). Based on these studies, the OP2031 directs growth to a planning horizon of 2031.

Following the adoption of the OP2031, significant changes to the provincial planning framework in Ontario were introduced, including Bill 97 (*Helping Homebuyer, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023*), which changed the definition of Employment Areas. This change created the need to revisit the OP2031 to re-evaluate the total quantum of employment land that is available for growth in the context of the new definition. Bill 185 (*Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*) intends to remove planning responsibilities from the County of Simcoe and shift decision-making to the Township. However, as of the date of this report, the Provincial government has not specified the date when this transfer of responsibilities will occur.

The new PPS 2024 was also introduced following the OP2031’s adoption and replaced both the Provincial Policy Statement (“PPS 2020”) and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (“Growth Plan”). 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. In either case, the PPS 2024 requires municipalities to make sufficient land available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses, including

residential uses, to meet projected growth needs over a time horizon of at least 20 years, but no more than 30 years. It should be noted that planning for infrastructure, public service facilities, strategic growth areas and Employment Areas may extend beyond this time horizon.

Since the Township's Official Plan only planned to 2031, which is less than the minimum 20-year planning horizon required by the PPS 2024, a new GMS was required to update the Official Plan horizon. It is important to note that the PPS 2024 requires the land and unit supply maintained by a lower-tier municipality (i.e., Springwater) to be based on the allocation of population and units established by the upper-tier municipality (i.e., County of Simcoe). Consequently, updates to the Township's Official Plan must reflect the population and units allocated to the Township through SCOPA 7, which provides projections to 2051. This GMS updates the Township's growth horizon to 2051 based on the SCOPA 7 projections and also extends these projects to 2056, integrating updated growth forecasts to establish a 30-year planning horizon at the time of the GMS, as permitted by the Provincial Policy Statement, 2024 ("PPS 2024").

The GMS confirms that the Township of Springwater is expected to experience sustained population and employment growth to 2051 and beyond, as is also indicated by the updated Ministry of Finance projections and the regional market pressures highlighted in the 2024 Joint Land Needs Analysis undertaken by Hemson Consulting. With relation to land needs, this GMS identifies a surplus of designated Community Area lands, which will allow forecasted residential growth to be accommodated within existing settlement boundaries. By contrast, the GMS identifies a deficit in Employment Area lands amounting to 81 gross hectares to 2056. The GMS therefore highlights the strategic importance of planning for additional employment lands, especially those with strong goods-movement access such as those along the Highway 400 corridor.

The GMS outlines a preferred growth scenario option, which is supported by a fiscal assessment and servicing capacity evaluation. Ultimately, the preferred scenario will guide how Springwater can balance intensification, complete community development, and expanded employment opportunities to 2051 and beyond. This also ensures that infrastructure, public service facilities, and land supply are aligned with long-term growth in Springwater in a manner consistent with the evolving provincial planning framework.

### **1.3 Growth Management Study Process**

In the Fall of 2024, the Township of Springwater retained WSP Canada Inc. ("WSP") to conduct this GMS to recommend a preferred growth scenario to guide population and employment growth to 2051 and beyond. This growth scenario has been developed to align with the Township's strategic priorities, as well as Provincial and County requirements, recognizing that significant provincial policy changes have occurred since the adoption of the Township's Official Plan in 2023.

As part of Phase 1 of the GMS, a Background Report was prepared in May 2025, which reviewed:

- The existing planning framework, including the recent provincial policy and legislation changes, such as the introduction of the PPS 2024.
- The applicable population and employment forecasts and growth allocations included in the Simcoe County Municipal Comprehensive Review (“MCR”).
- The Council-adopted Simcoe County Official Plan Amendment 7 (“SCOPA 7”), which has not yet been approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (“MMAH”) at the time of this report and is not in-effect.
- The Joint Land Needs Analysis and Study (December 2024), prepared by Hemson Consulting, which assessed land needs in the City of Barrie in addition to the Townships of Oro-Medonte and Springwater.
- Local economic drivers and trends that influence growth in the Township of Springwater, as discussed in the 2022 Simcoe Growth Allocations and in the 2024 Joint Land Needs Analysis.

Based on this work, the GMS team developed potential growth options that were presented in a memo to Township staff dated May 2025. This memo introduced two focused study areas that could be considered for boundary expansions, pending the completion of extended growth forecasts and a new land needs assessment. A corresponding presentation to Council was made in June 2025, which outlined the identified growth options. Updated growth forecasts and a land needs assessment were then completed in Summer 2025. The assessment showed no justifiable need for community/residential area lands.

Thereafter, the project team pivoted to focus on potential strategic locations for Employment Areas, recognizing the significant opportunity presented by the two major goods movement corridors running through Midhurst, namely Highway 26 and Highway 400. As described in section 3, it was determined that Highway 400 represented the more strategic location for additional employment lands in Springwater. The boundaries of the expansion lands were refined through discussions with municipal planning staff in fall 2025, and the area was then analyzed in relation to servicing and fiscal impacts.

The findings and final recommendation resulting from this analysis are presented in this report and represent the final phase of the GMS portion of this exercise. If endorsed by Council, the project team will initiate the Official Plan Amendment, including launching the public engagement process and drafting the Official Plan Amendment policies, to bring OP2031 into conformity with the 2056 Planning Horizon.

## 2 Summary of Growth Forecasts and Land Needs Analysis

This section summarizes the residential and employment growth forecasts and the land needs assessment undertaken as part of the GMS, as outlined in the January 8, 2026, memorandum prepared by Watson & Associated Economists Ltd. (Appendix A). The analysis concludes that there is no justifiable need for additional community/residential lands to 2056; however, there is a modest need for approximately 81 hectares of employment lands. It should be noted that, with recent updates to PPS 2024, planning for employment lands is no longer restricted by the 30-year horizon used in the Land Needs Assessment. Therefore, additional employment lands beyond the 81-hectare deficit can be considered and are recommended for inclusion in the Settlement Area Boundary to plan for and support a long term, strategic employment land opportunity within the Township. Further discussion of this recommendation is provided in subsequent sections.

### 2.1 Growth Forecasts

#### 2.1.1 Residential Growth

Growth Forecasts demonstrated that between 2001 and 2024, Simcoe County experienced an average annual net migration of approximately 7,500 persons, with more recent growth from 2021 to 2024 averaging around 12,040 individuals per year, driven largely by in migration from within Ontario and by increasing rates of international migration.<sup>1</sup> It is anticipated that, due to new migration limits and the diminishing impacts of the pandemic, growth to 2051 is now projected to be more moderate than previously expected. This moderation is reflected in the declining Ministry of Finance projections for the Simcoe Census as a whole, where forecasts made in 2023, 2024, and 2025 for the 2046 population were progressively reduced—from 846,000 to 2046 in the 2023 projection to 827,000 in the 2024 projection, and then to 786,000 in the 2025 projection. The 2025 Ministry of Finance projections for the Simcoe Census Division now anticipate an annual growth rate of 1.4% from 2021 to 2051, representing 277,000 persons over 30 years. It is important to note in this context that the Simcoe Census Division is inclusive of all Simcoe County municipalities in addition to Barrie, Orillia, the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, and Christian Island.

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<sup>1</sup> Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. "Township of Springwater: Growth Management Strategy – Growth Forecast and Land Needs Analysis", January 2026, p.4.

Table 1: Comparison of Population Forecasts to 2046 Provided through the Growth Plan, 2020 and Ministry of Finance Projections for the Simcoe Census Division

	Year of Forecast Preparation					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Growth Plan</b>	<b>846,000</b> (to 2046) <sup>2</sup>  <b>902,000</b> (to 2051)	-	-	-	-	-
<b>M.O.F.</b>	-	<b>773,000</b> (to 2046)	<b>794,000</b> (to 2046)	<b>846,000</b> (to 2046)	<b>827,000</b> (to 2046)  <b>876,000</b> (to 2051)	<b>786,000</b> (to 2046)  <b>826,000</b> (to 2051)

As seen in Table 1, there is a difference in the 2051 forecast population of 76,000 people between the Growth Plan Forecasts prepared in August 2020, and the most recent MOF projections that were released in summer 2025.

Policy 2.1.2 of the PPS, 2024 permits municipalities to continue to forecast growth using the Growth Plan forecasts until such time as it can update these forecasts to reflect the Ontario Population Projections published by the Ministry of Finance. Consequently, the Simcoe County Official Plan Amendment 7 (“SCOPA 7”) relies on the 2020 Growth Plan projections, which exceed the highest Ministry of Finance projections by forecasting a population of 902,000 persons for the Simcoe Census Division by 2051<sup>3</sup>. This reflects a highly ambitious growth outlook. This growth analysis, in turn, relies upon the SCOPA 7 growth forecast targets to 2051, including the identified intensification targets for growth occurring within the Township’s designated Built-Up Area boundary (i.e., 15% intensification) and density targets for the Designated Growth Area (i.e., 45 people and jobs per hectare). Based on the SCOPA 7 forecasts and considerations outlined in Appendix A, Springwater is expected to reach a population of 32,500 by 2051 and 33,670 by 2056, representing an increase of 11,050 people between 2021 and 2056, with an average annual growth rate of 1.2%. Table shows the population, employment, and housing forecasts for the Township of Springwater from 2021 to 2056.

<sup>2</sup> Hemson Consulting Ltd., “Greater Golden Horseshoe: Growth Forecasts to 2051 – Technical Report” August 26, 2020, p. 37

<sup>3</sup> At the time of the Growth Management Study, Simcoe County was in the process of updating its forecasts, which will provide a 2056 population and employment forecast prepared using MOF forecasts.

Table 2: Summary of Springwater Growth Forecasts from 2021 to 2056

	2021	2051	2056	Increase 2021-2056
<b>People</b>	22,620	32,500	33,670	11,050 new people
<b>Jobs</b>	6,700	9,190	9,520	2,820 new jobs
<b>Housing Units</b>	7,505	12,650	13,250	5,745 new housing units

### 2.1.2 Employment Growth

Employment growth has also occurred across most sectors between 2014 to 2024, with notable gains in Construction; Healthcare and Social Assistance; Wholesale Trade; Education Services; Transportation and Warehousing; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Manufacturing. Moving forward, Employment is projected to grow at an annual rate of 1.0% between 2021 and 2056, reaching 9,520 jobs (an increase of 2,820 jobs), consistent with SCOPA 7. Approximately 48% of employment growth is expected in Population Related Employment sectors (e.g., retail, institutional, commercial, etc.), 47% in the Employment Area category (i.e., industrial type buildings), and 5% in rural employment.

## 2.2 Land Needs Assessment

The population, housing, and employment forecasts incorporate regional demographic trends, economic patterns, and local market conditions. Population forecasts are translated into households using anticipated Persons Per Unit (“PPU”) values, which are expected to decline over time due to an aging population and smaller household sizes. Housing structure type forecasts reflect supply factors, such as approved units, infill capacity, and vacant designated lands, as well as demand factors, including Census trends, building activity, regional economic conditions, and market appeal. Low-density housing is expected to remain dominant, although demand for medium and high-density housing is projected to increase relative to historic trends.

As Springwater continues transitioning from a predominantly rural, agricultural municipality into a growing community influenced by additional people coming to Simcoe County and the Greater Golden Horseshoe, it is expected to attract additional immigration from young families and professionals seeking more affordable housing in a rural/urban environment. Coordinating the Township’s evolving economic role with its long-term housing needs by market segment is therefore essential.

### 2.2.1 Residential Land Needs

Recent Statistics Canada Census data and building permit activity show that population growth in Springwater is tracking relatively closely to the SCOPA 7 projections; however, building permit issuance in the Township is lower than forecasted. This may be due to higher Persons per Unit (“P.P.U.”) in recent postcensal estimates, likely influenced by housing affordability pressures leading to larger or multi-generational households, as well as larger household sizes among recent immigrants. Accordingly, the housing forecast has been adjusted to reflect this trend.

From 2015 to 2024, the Township issued approximately 180 building permits per year for new housing units, with peaks in 2016 and 2022 and declines since 2022, though long term recovery is expected. Between 2021 and 2056, housing development is forecast to average 164 units per year, totaling 5,750 units with a composition of 77% low density, 13% medium density, and 10% high density units. A development peak is anticipated in 2031, followed by gradually declining growth rates caused, in part, by the aging population in Springwater.<sup>45</sup>

Based on the updated population forecasts, the Township is forecast to add about 5,110 housing units between 2025 and 2056, with approximately 3,930 in the Township’s greenfield areas. As of 2025, Springwater has about 9,590 units in the development approval process within the Designated Growth Area (“D.G.A.”) and about 3,480 additional units on 250 hectares of vacant residential land (excluding 3,000 units that are currently under a Minister’s Zoning Order request). Based on these estimates, the Township’s D.G.A. is forecast to accommodate about 10,350 people and jobs between 2025 and 2056. Compared to the overall unit supply, the Township is forecast to have a surplus of approximately 9,140 units (excluding MZOs) and about 970 gross developable hectares of D.G.A. lands. Between 2021 and 2056, Springwater’s population is anticipated to increase by 11,050 persons, which equates to an average demand of approximately 109 new housing units per year, assuming an average household size of 2.9 persons per unit. When considered in this context and based on the same growth assumptions, the surplus anticipated by 2056 represents a long-term supply in excess of 80 years beyond the 2056 planning horizon. As part of the GMS, three high level growth outcome scenarios were evaluated to determine whether existing land supplies are sufficient under varying growth conditions:

1. 5% share of Simcoe County growth (consistent with SCOPA 7): 5,145 new units from 2021-2051
2. 8% share of County growth: 7,100 new units from 2021-2051
3. 10% share of County growth: 8,500 new units from 2021-2051 (equivalent to a 2% annual population growth rate, which is 43% higher than Ministry of Finance 2025 projections)

<sup>4</sup> Growth Forecast and Land Needs Analysis, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Growth Forecast and Land Needs Analysis, p. 13.

Under all scenarios, the Township can accommodate long term community/residential land growth through units already in the development approvals process. Lands under the Minister's Zoning Order request and remaining vacant urban lands provide further capacity. Therefore, no Settlement Area Boundary Expansion is required to accommodate additional new population-related growth to 2056.

### 2.2.2 Employment Land Needs

Employment in the Township is projected to reach 9,190 jobs in 2051 and 9,520 jobs in 2056.<sup>6</sup> 1,090 of the additional jobs to 2056 are forecasted to be located on Employment Area lands (i.e., jobs located in Industrial-type buildings).<sup>7</sup> Based on the Township's industrial profile and the mix of larger and smaller settlement areas, it is recommended that the Employment Area density target be adjusted from 20 jobs per hectare (as targeted by SCOPA 7) to 15 jobs per hectare. The forecast has also been extended to 2056 to align with the 30-year planning horizon required for this exercise. This results in an employment land demand of 69 net hectares by 2056. With only 16 net hectares of vacant Employment Area land available, a deficit of 53 net hectares is anticipated by 2056. Accounting for nondevelopable features, infrastructure needs, and a 15% contingency, results in a **gross employment land need of 81 hectares by 2056.**

As the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 ("PPS, 2024") enables municipalities to plan beyond a 30-year horizon and encourages proactive planning for complete communities, the Township should prepare to expand its Employment Areas to support growth beyond 2056. In doing so, it will be necessary to ensure that the Township grows as a complete community that provides opportunities for both residential and employment growth. Planning for the long-term development of new Employment Areas at the same time as residential expansions will help to ensure balanced development and the creation of complete communities. In essence, every effort should be made to provide communities within Springwater where residents can both live and work and not have to resort to potentially long-commuting jobs that do not contribute to the local economy.

While policy 2.1.5 of the PPS, 2024 directs lower-tier municipalities to base their land and unit supply forecasts on the allocation of population and units by the upper-tier municipality, Simcoe County's current forecasts have not yet been updated to address the 30-year horizon or beyond. At present, Simcoe County is in the process of updating its forecasts, which will provide a 2056 population and employment forecast prepared using the Ministry of Finance forecasts.

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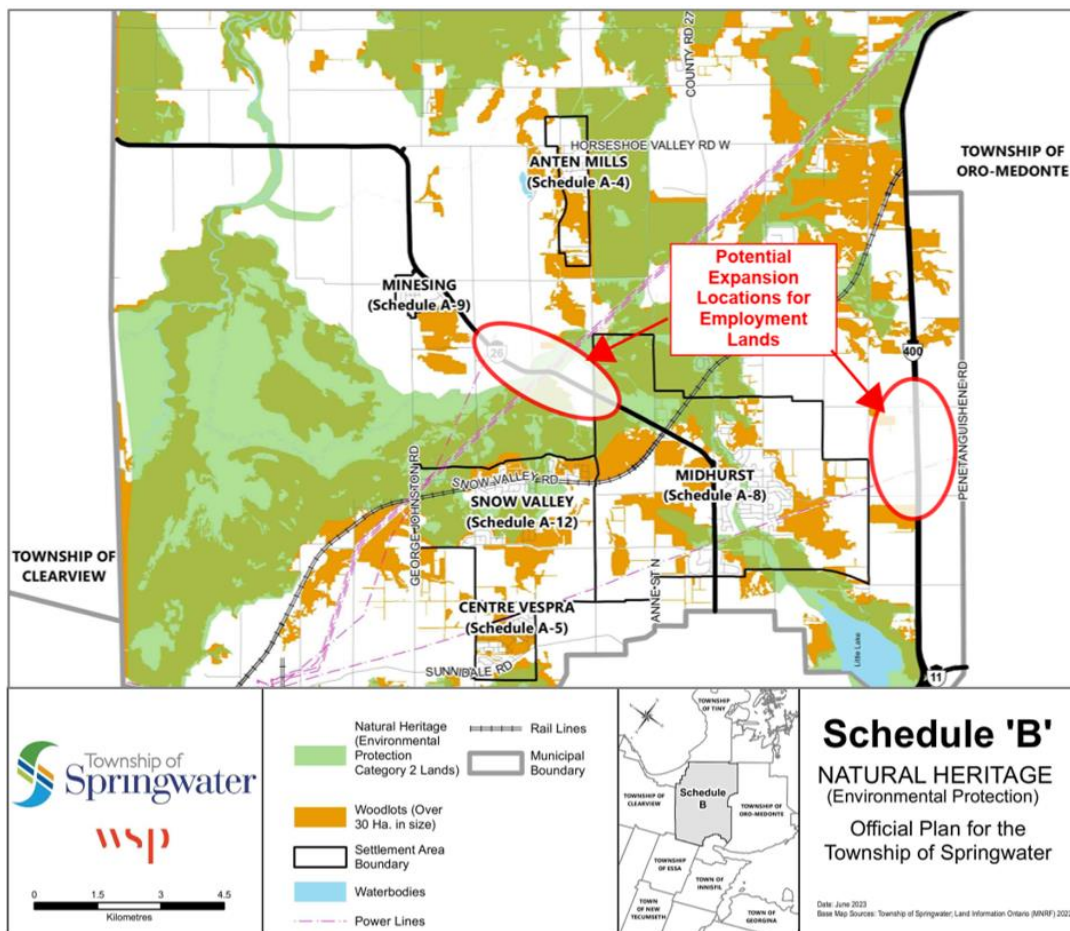
<sup>6</sup> Growth Forecast and Land Needs Analysis, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Growth Forecast and Land Needs Analysis, p. 22.

### 3 Strategic Direction: Long Term Planning for Employment Lands along Highway 400

Following the Land Needs Assessment determining that 81 hectares are needed for Employment Areas, the project team reviewed options for new Employment Areas in the Township of Springwater. In order to be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, preference was given to areas that were adjacent to existing settlement areas and in proximity to major goods movement corridors. Figure 1 shows two areas adjacent the existing Midhurst Settlement Area that were considered as candidates for future employment lands.

Figure 1: Extract from Schedule B – Alternate Locations Considered for Future Employment Lands



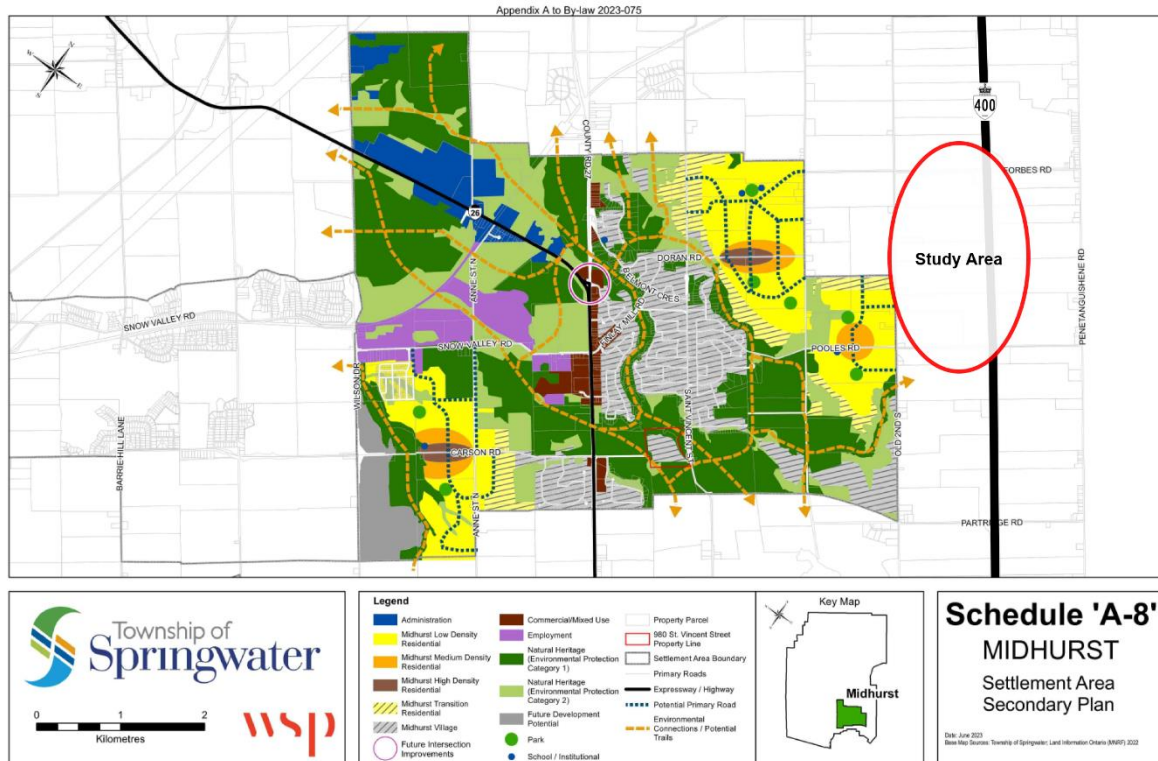
The following high-level parameters were considered when narrowing down the Study Area:

- Midhurst is the largest settlement area in the Township of Springwater and is expected to be the destination for the majority of population and employment growth to 2051 and beyond.
- Given this focus on Midhurst, in our opinion it is appropriate and good planning to provide additional employment lands to complement the community lands to the west (Midhurst low density and Midhurst medium density). The two major goods movement corridors running through Midhurst are Hwy 26 and Hwy 400. Highway 400 provides an important connection to Northern Ontario.
- The lands along Highway 26, comprising are constrained by the presence of the Hydro Corridor and significant natural heritage resources (Figure 1) and as such do not represent a logical, contiguous land assembly that could accommodate additional employment lands to 2051, 2056 and additional areas adjacent for potential future longer-term employment purposes.
- Previous direction from Council (resolution C061-2025) asking staff to consider lands east of Midhurst along Highway 400 for potential Employment Area expansions, and to review the infrastructure that would be available for the built out of these lands.
- Ongoing investments in infrastructure upgrades such as the Craig Road Extension to the intersection at Forbes Road / Russell Road.

Based on the parameters described above, the Study Area located on lands east of the Midhurst Settlement Area towards Highway 400 and outlined in the Memorandum by WSP dated May 22, 2025 (Appendix B) was recommended for future employment land expansion in Springwater. The area benefits from its proximity to the Forbes Road Highway 400 interchange and direct access to a major goods movement corridor, which are important as recent employment growth in Ontario has been driven largely by warehousing, logistics, and goods movement industries. From a land use planning perspective, it is common to provide lands along major goods corridors for employment-type uses given their proximity and access to the corridor itself (Highway 400 in this instance), while acting as a buffer to more sensitive community lands (residential) in the Midhurst Secondary Plan Area.

As a result, the area along Highway 400 was confirmed as the most appropriate location for additional employment lands in the Township. The project team then proceeded to refine the study area and delineate the precise boundaries of the lands to be added, based on the quantum of land needed and capturing the highway interchange. The potential for long-term development on the subject lands was a key consideration. For example, the aggregate pit north of Forbes Road will become an ideal candidate for employment lands uses once the lands are rehabilitated.

Figure 2: Study Area Identified in Memo Dated May 22, 2025



The selection of this new Employment Area aligns with PPS 2024 policy 2.8.2.2 which states that:

Planning authorities shall protect Employment Areas that are located in proximity to major goods movement facilities and corridors, including facilities and corridors identified in provincial transportation plans, for the Employment Area uses that require those locations.

Study Area Lands are therefore well aligned with provincial direction and sound planning principles. Establishing a protected Employment Area along Highway 400 will support Springwater’s long term employment base and ensure that jobs are available for future residents of Midhurst and the broader community, advancing the Township’s objectives for complete communities offering a range of housing and employment opportunities.

**This GMS recommends that the lands shown in Figure 3 be added to the Midhurst Settlement Area and planned for employment uses.**

Figure 3: Recommended lands to be added to Midhurst Settlement Area

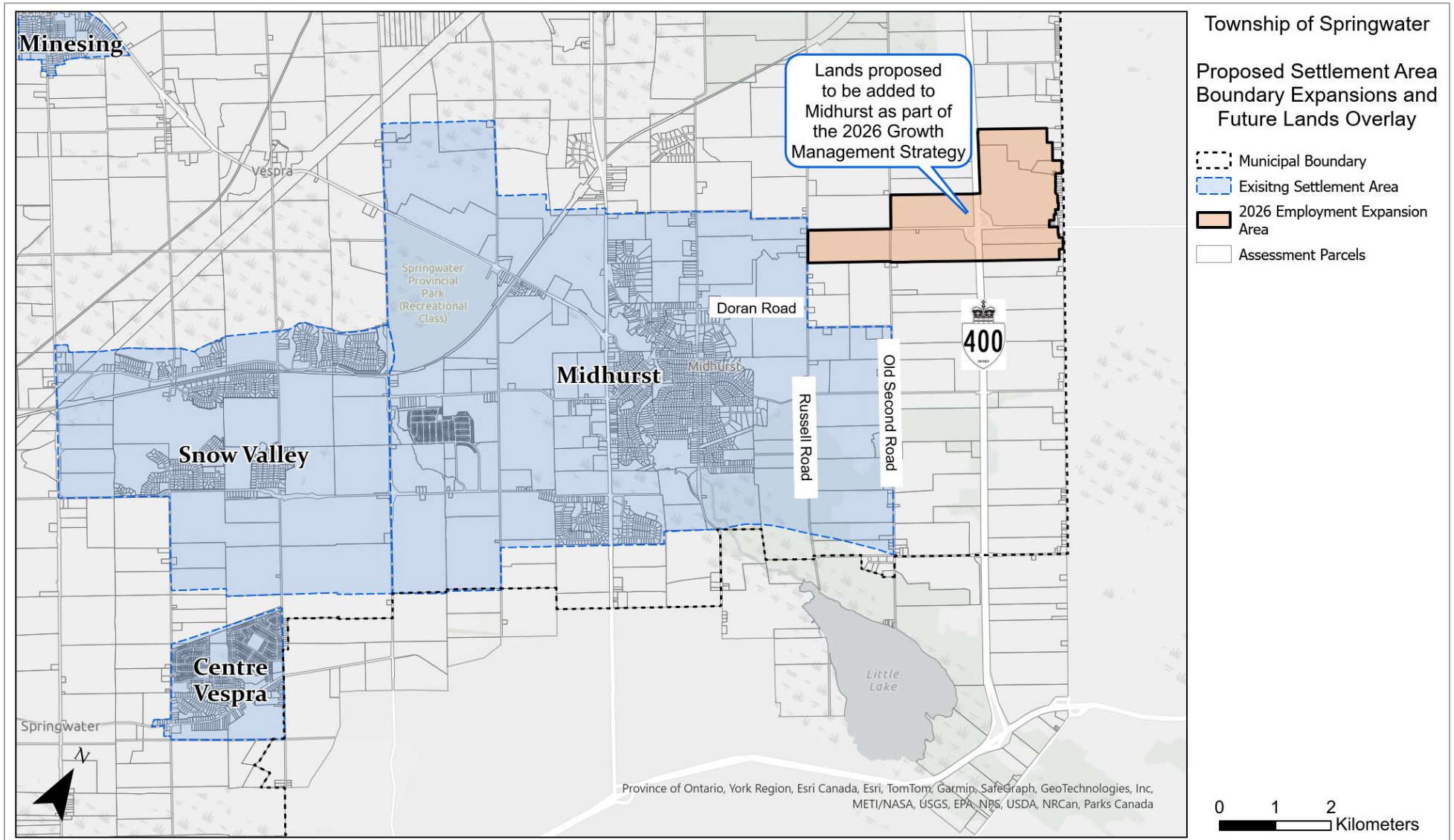
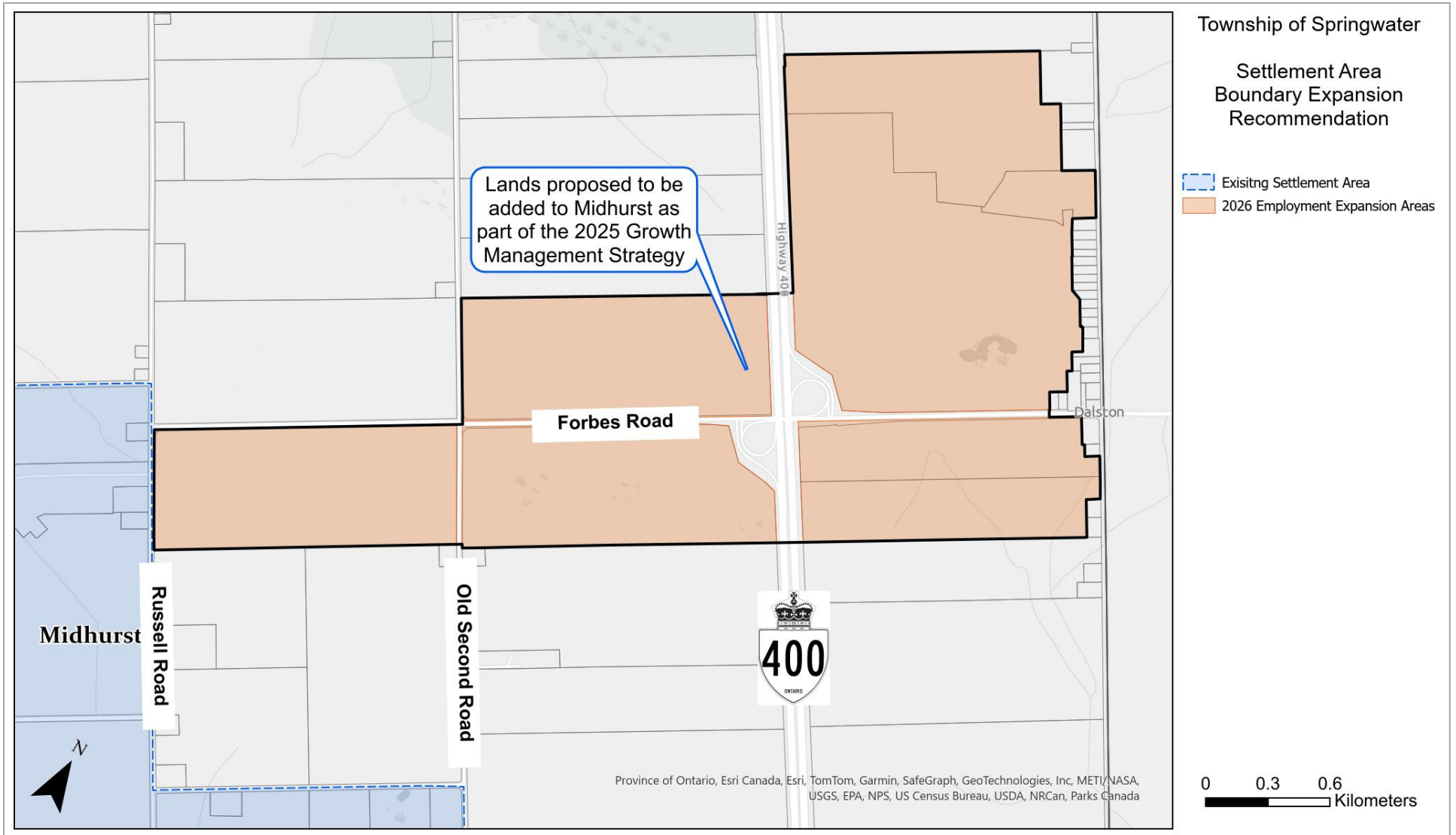


Figure 4: Zoom of Recommended lands to be added to Midhurst Settlement Area

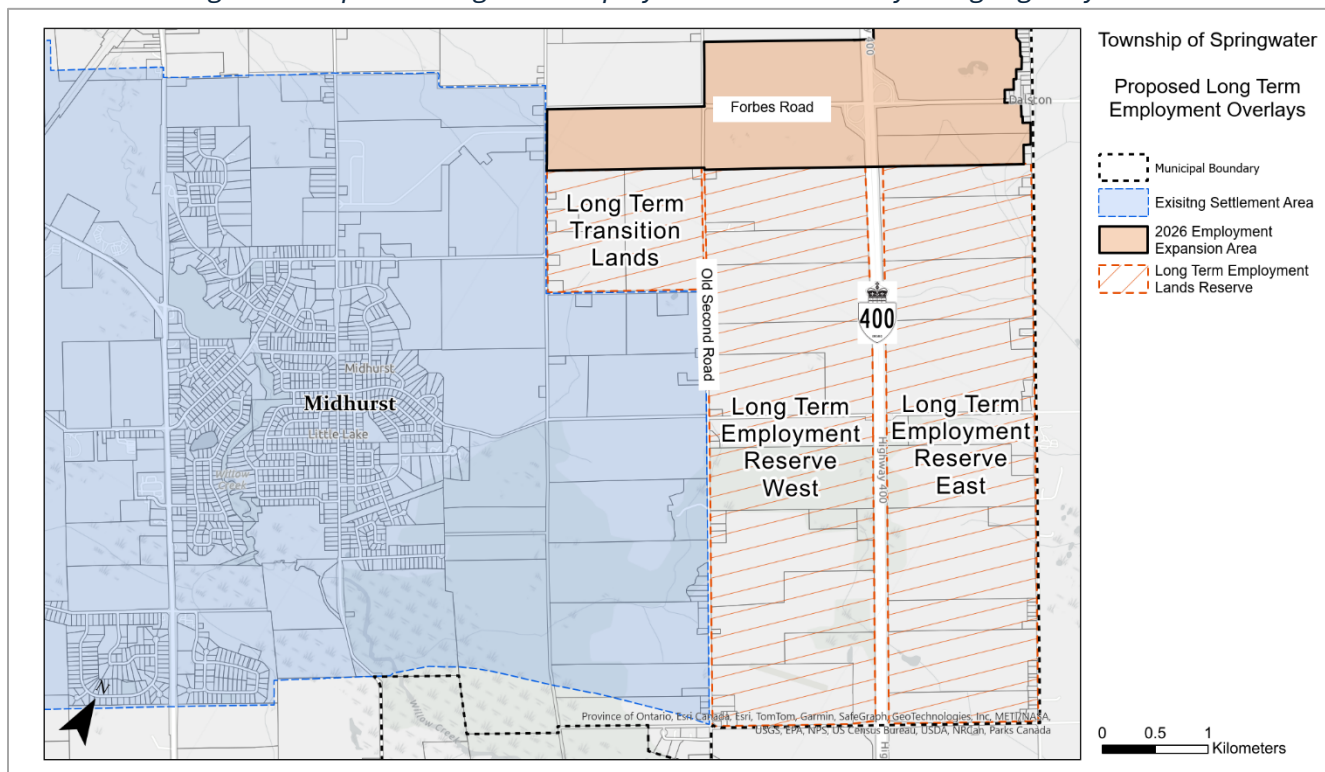


### Long-Term Employment Lands Overlays

In addition to the lands shown in Figure 3 that are recommended to be added to the Midhurst Settlement Area, it is recommended that the Township introduce two overlays that will signal the intent of the Township to preserve the lands along Highway 400 for long-term employment uses.

- 1. Long Term Transition Lands:** These are lands immediately adjacent to the Midhurst Settlement Area between Russell Road and Old Second Road. When developed, they are intended to provide a transition area between the intended employment uses along Highway 400, and the residential community currently under development on the west side of Russell Road. Considering that there is no demonstrated need for additional community area lands at this time, these lands are not proposed to be added into the settlement area boundary as part of this growth management exercise.
- 2. Long Term Employment Reserve:** These lands extend on either side of Highway 400, from the southern edge of the recommended expansion lands to Partridge Road. It is recognized that the lands on either side of Highway 400 represent a strategic asset for the Township of Springwater. While there is no demonstrated need for such a large quantum of land to be added to the settlement area at this time, it is nonetheless recommended that the Township signal their intention of preserving these lands for long term employment uses, to be considered for inclusions through an overlay in a future growth management exercise, and subject to future community consultation and analysis.

Figure 5: Proposed Long Term Employment Lands Overlay Along Highway 400



## 3.1 Policy Context

### 3.1.1 Consolidation of the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement

On October 20, 2024, the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS 2024) came into effect. This is now the key provincial policy document that guides decisions about long term planning and growth management in Ontario. The PPS 2024 consolidates some policies that had previously existed in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe but provides considerably more latitude for municipalities to determine their growth targets and designate lands for development.

The key policy changes that affect the recommendations of this GMS relate to settlement area boundary expansions and the removal of the concept of the “comprehensive review”. The removal of the comprehensive review as a requirement for a settlement boundary expansion means that boundary expansions or the establishment of new settlement areas can occur at any time. Nonetheless, the addition of lands to the settlement area boundary would still require an amendment to the Simcoe County Official Plan, which necessitates coordination between the Township and County.

Notwithstanding this change, when considering a boundary expansion or new settlement area, municipalities must consider criteria that are comparable to the previous requirements of the comprehensive review, including the need for additional land to accommodate growth, impacts on the agricultural system, servicing capacity, and phased progression of growth (Policy 2.3.2.1 detailed below).

Policy 2.1.3 of the PPS 2024 notes that:

Planning for infrastructure, public service facilities, strategic growth areas and Employment Areas may extend beyond [the 30-year] time horizon.

The lands being recommended for inclusion into the Midhurst Settlement Area are forecast to be fully built out beyond the 2056 horizon. Nonetheless, the analysis in subsection 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 of this report demonstrates why planning for this strategic Employment Area along Highway 400 requires long-term planning and preservation of these lands for future employment opportunities.

### 3.1.2 Long Term Planning Horizons

PPS policy 2.1.3 was developed to recognize the fact that employment lands are planned and developed on a longer cycle when compared with community area lands. There are limited areas in municipalities that are appropriate for land intensive employment uses such as logistics, warehousing, and manufacturing, these are typically located away from residential areas and in proximity to highway interchanges. In the Township’s growth forecasts several industries were identified as drivers for employment growth, including wholesale trade, manufacturing, and warehousing. By adding the proposed lands into the settlement area boundary, the municipality

can move forward with planning the necessary infrastructure that will signal Springwater's readiness to accommodate large-scale investments from new employers.

The recommended employment lands centred around the interchange at Hwy 400 and Forbes Road Lands represent a strategic opportunity for long-term employment planning in Springwater. They are in close proximity to both Midhurst and Barrie, providing a considerable population base for future employment growth. This will contribute to the development of a complete community in Midhurst, where the expected population growth can be complemented with local employment opportunities.

Although Policy 2.1.5 of the PPS, 2024 requires lower-tier municipalities to base land and unit supply forecasts on upper-tier allocations, Simcoe County's current forecasts have not yet been updated to reflect a 30-year planning horizon. The County is presently updating its population and employment forecasts to 2056 using Ministry of Finance projections, informed in part by this Growth Management Study.

The future Employment Area centred around Forbes Road would have many of the same characteristics as the Bradford West Gwillimbury Strategic Settlement Employment Area and the Innisfil Heights Strategic Settlement Employment Area. Both of these areas were planned for long-term employment development on a 30+ year horizon. They contain large parcels of employment lands adjacent to interchanges with Highway 400. The recommended lands in Springwater would represent a large Employment Area north of Barrie that could be regionally significant and leverage its location to attract businesses with operations north of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The recommended lands are immediately adjacent to planned services (Section 3.2 of this report), and the PPS 2024 is supportive of long-range planning for strategic employment lands that extends beyond the 30-year horizon. The inclusion of the recommended lands into the Midhurst Settlement Area at this time will preserve this strategic location for employment uses and enable the municipality to adequately account for these lands in its future infrastructure plans.

### 3.1.3 Employment Areas

As discussed above, the recommended employment lands represent a strategic opportunity for long-term employment growth in Springwater. Preserving these lands aligns directly with Provincial policy direction from section 2.8.2 of the PPS 2024. This section notes that:

- 2.8.2.1 Planning authorities shall plan for, protect and preserve Employment Areas for current and future uses, and ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and projected needs.
- 2.8.2.2 Planning authorities shall protect Employment Areas that are located in proximity to major goods movement facilities and corridors ... for the Employment Area uses that require those locations.

Highway 400 is considered a “major goods movement corridor” as it facilitates the inter- and intra-provincial movement of goods. It is a key gateway between Northern Ontario and the Greater Golden Horseshoe and would also contribute to future investments in key Provincial infrastructure projects such as the “Ring of Fire”. The recommended employment lands are located immediately adjacent to this major goods movement corridor (2.8.2.2). The addition of these employment lands to the Midhurst Settlement Area is consistent with the PPS 2024 as it plans for and protects an Employment Area for future uses (2.8.2.1). Adding these lands to the settlement area at this time will help the municipality to “ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided” (2.8.2.1).

### 3.1.4 Considerations for Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

As noted in Section 3.1.1 of this report, a settlement area boundary expansion may now occur at any time and is not limited to the comprehensive review process. A boundary expansion does require coordination between the Township and the County, as both the upper-tier and lower-tier Official Plans will need to be amended to reflect the boundary expansion. The PPS 2024 lists criteria that shall “be considered” by planning authorities when allowing a settlement area boundary expansion. These are found in PPS 2024 policy 2.3.2.1, and each of the criteria is considered below:

#### 2.3.2.1 (a) The need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses

The land needs assessment (Appendix A) noted that the municipality will require 81 hectares of additional employment lands to 2056. It is recognized that this report is recommending the inclusion of 280 hectares of employment lands, which is beyond the demonstrated need to 2056.

However, as discussed in Section 3.1.1, the PPS 2024 allows employment lands to be planned beyond the need demonstrated to the 30-year horizon. The lands around the Highway 400 & Forbes Road interchange represent a strategic opportunity for long term employment growth in Midhurst. The designation of these lands for long term growth is supported by policies 2.1.3, 2.8.2.1, and 2.8.2.2 of the PPS 2024.

Additionally, by planning for employment lands to be developed in tandem with residential development in Midhurst, the Township can more effectively promote the development of complete communities through a balanced mix of land uses, including housing and transportation options, employment uses, public service facilities, institutional uses, parks and recreation spaces, and open spaces, while improving accessibility, social equity, and quality of life for people of all ages, abilities, as directed by policy 2.1.6 of the PPS 2024.

#### 2.3.2.1 (b) If there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities

The municipality is currently in the process of updating its Water and Wastewater Master Plan. However, the updated Master Plan will have a horizon year of 2041 and

only encompasses those lands currently within the Settlement Area. The subject lands are planned to be developed as Employment Area uses only after 2041 and are currently outside the Settlement Area. Consequently, they are not reflected in the municipality's existing infrastructure plans but will be considered through future updates.

As outlined in the Servicing Report (Appendix C), a review of existing servicing infrastructure, planned system expansions, and projected water and wastewater demands for the proposed 280-hectare employment area confirms that planned upgrades in Midhurst are sufficient to support the site. These upgrades—including the Doran Water Treatment Plant, expanded well capacity, new storage facilities, and the new municipal wastewater treatment plant—provide servicing capacity that exceeds the site's projected maximum day water demand and associated wastewater flows. Additionally, the proposed Employment Area would efficiently leverage planned municipal road infrastructure in Midhurst as well as the anticipated Forbes Road extension investments. Locating employment uses in this area maximizes the benefit of these planned transportation investments by supporting coordinated growth and improved access to the broader road network.

**2.3.2.1 (c) Whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas**

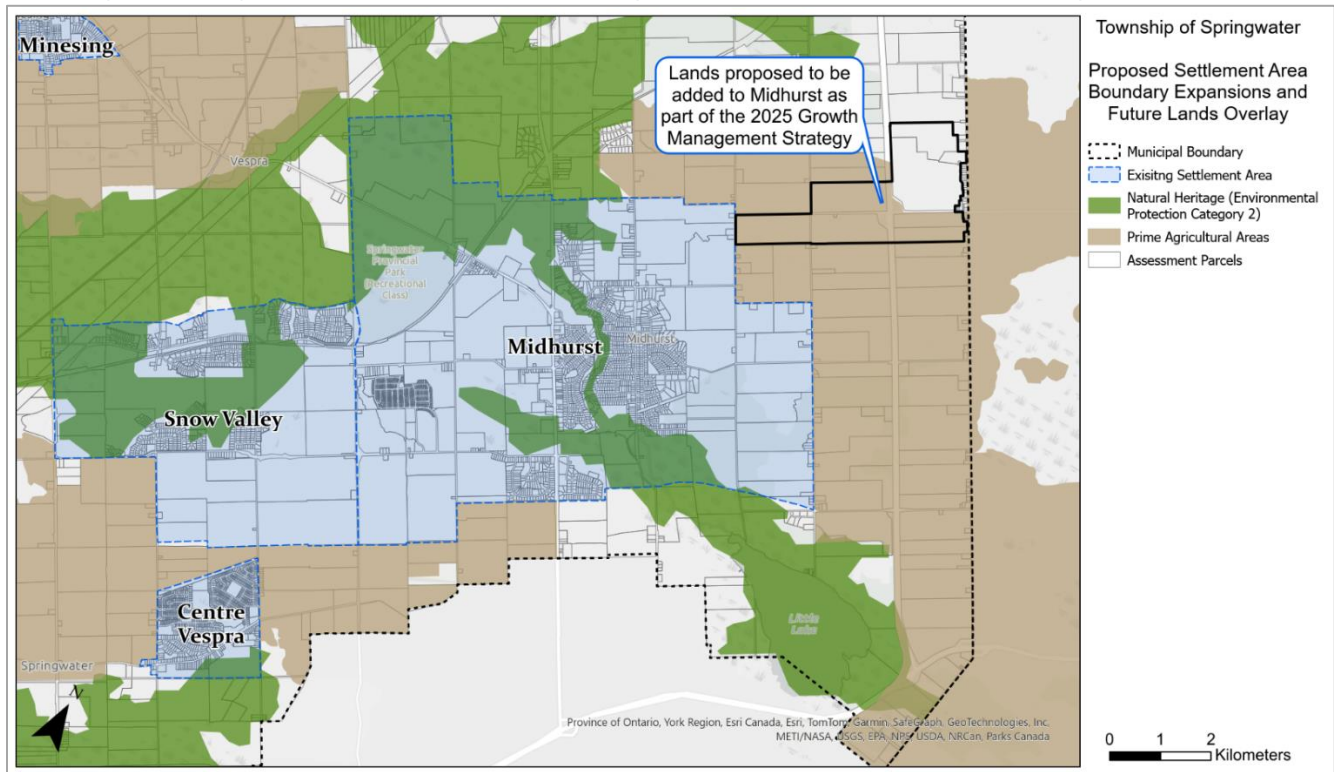
It has been confirmed through desktop GIS analysis that the subject lands do not comprise specialty crop areas.

**2.3.2.1 (d) The evaluation of alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas and, where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas**

**2.3.2.1 (f) Whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance**

The criteria represented by PPS 2024 policy 2.3.2.1 (d) and 2.3.2.1 (f) were considered together as they are interconnected. Avoidance of prime agricultural areas (d) will reduce impacts on the agricultural system (f). This desktop analysis has considered the location of prime agricultural lands, soil classes as defined by the Canada Land Inventory, as well as the fragmentation of agricultural uses and overall impacts on the agricultural system.

Figure 6: Subject lands in relation to Prime Agricultural Areas and Natural Heritage Constraints

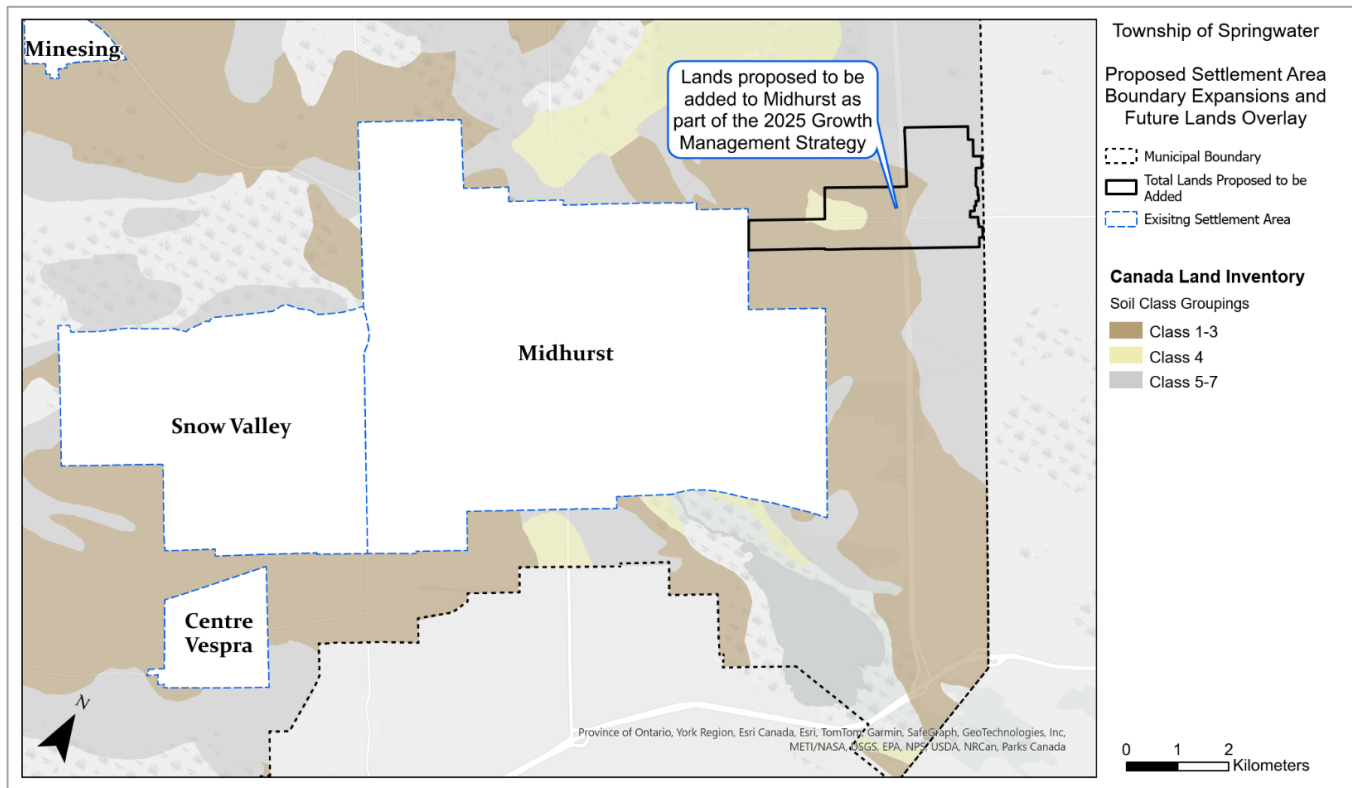


The desktop GIS analysis used mapping of the agricultural land base for the Greater Golden Horseshoe that was developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. It should be noted that this desktop analysis may need to be supported by an Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) or equivalent when detailed planning for the area is being advanced. An assessment of other land use constraints/conflicts that impact potential uses within the Employment Area will also be conducted at this later stage. This can also include the complete calculation of MDS setback requirements.

As shown in Figure 6 approximately 60% of the lands proposed to be added are prime agricultural areas, primarily focused on the western portion of the subject lands. Figure 7 shows Canada Land Inventory (CLI) soil classes on the subject lands and confirms that the eastern portion of the lands is less suited for agriculture.

The potential for impacts to the agricultural system relate primarily to the fragmentation of agricultural lands. It is noted that lands south of the expansion area continue to represent a large, contiguous area of agricultural uses. As shown in Figure 7, there is a considerable concentration of Class 1-3 lands south of the expansion area that will continue to be designated for agricultural uses.

Figure 7: Canada Land Inventory Soil Classes on Subject Lands



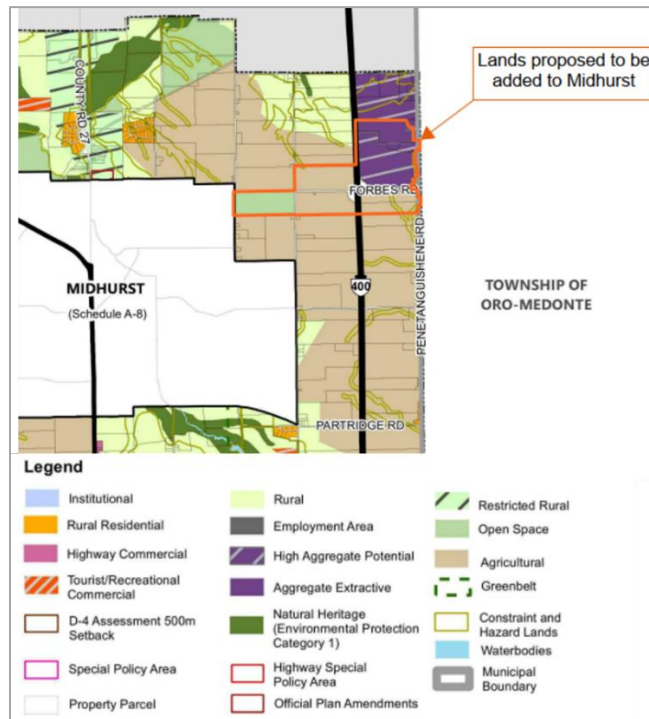
There are no anticipated impacts to the agri-food network as there are no significant supply chain elements or services neither within the expansion lands nor in the broader study area surrounding the expansion lands.

Moreover, the potential addition of employment lands can promote the development of food distribution hubs, processing facilities, or agriculture equipment suppliers in proximity to the existing agricultural operations. Whereas the addition of community area lands typically increases the possibility for land use conflicts between agriculture and sensitive uses, the addition of employment lands adjacent to agricultural operations has then potential to enhance those operations and contribute to the overall growth of the agri-food network.

Figure 6 shows that the Midhurst Settlement Area is generally constrained on all sides by either prime agricultural areas or natural heritage protections. Therefore, it is unavoidable for an expansion for long-term employment land uses to not occur on some prime agricultural lands. The proposed expansion area represents a strategic location for employment uses along a major goods corridor, adjacent to the existing settlement area, and includes a significant proportion of lands that are not viable for agriculture. As seen in Figure 7, 50% of the lands in the proposed expansion area contain soils that are Class 5, 6, or 7 in the Canada Lands Inventory. These classes represent lands that have very severe limitation for agriculture, including Class 7 soils, which have no capacity for agriculture.

The Township’s Official Plan reflects the limited agricultural potential for the subject lands. As shown in Figure 8, the lands immediately adjacent to the settlement area are designated “Open Space”, whereas the lands between Highway 400 and Penetanguishene Road are largely designated “Aggregate Extractive” or “High Aggregate Potential”.

Figure 8: Extract from 2023 Springwater Official Plan – Schedule A-3



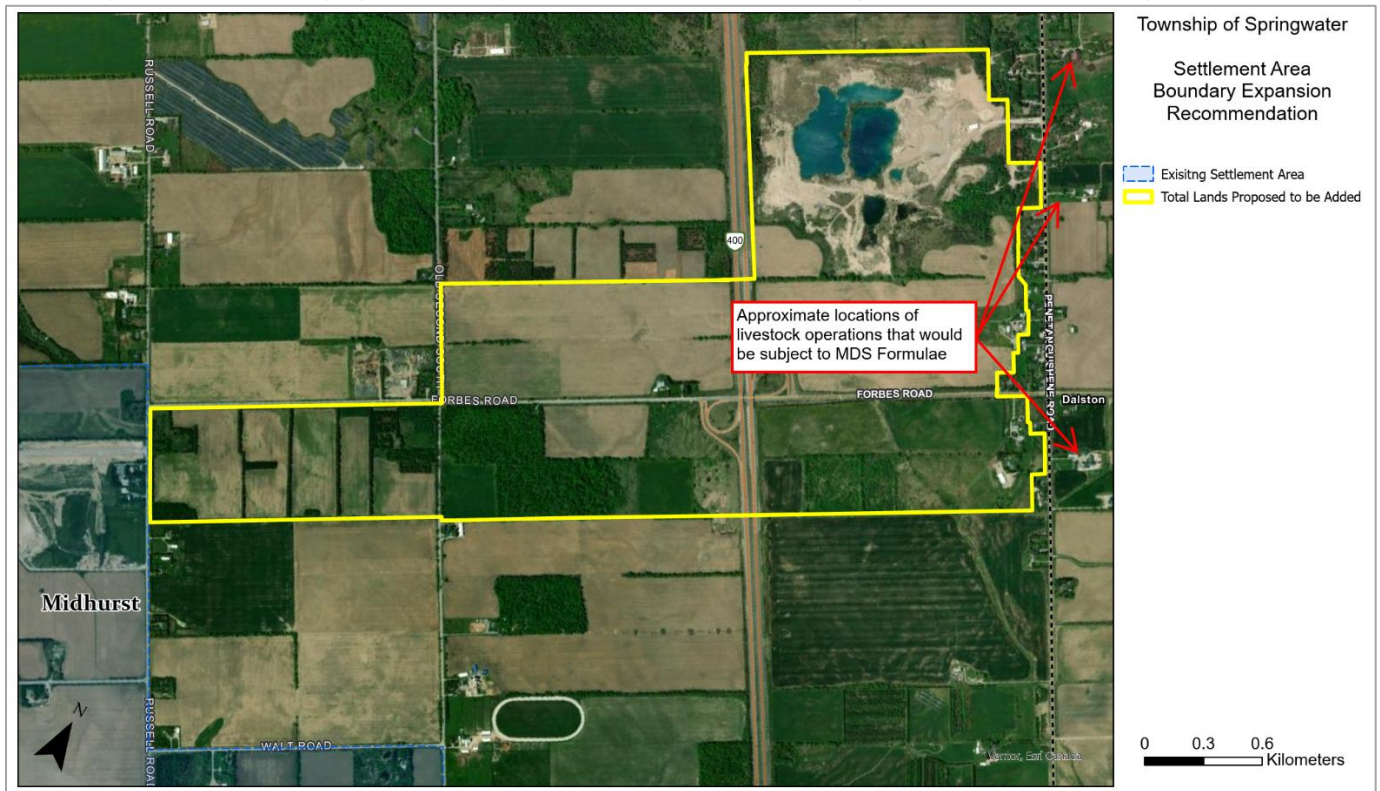
It should be noted the north-eastern portion of the subject lands contains an aggregate site. This site is located at 1888 Penetanguishene Road and is presently operated by CBM Aggregates. The inclusion of these lands into the settlement area is not intended to affect the aggregate operation. It is intended to permit the Township to initiate the process of long-range infrastructure planning that will enable industrial development on this location after the rehabilitation of the site.

### 2.3.2.1 (e) Whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation formulae

A desktop analysis was performed to identify agricultural uses that could be affected by the settlement area boundary expansion and to determine the extent to which minimum distance separation (MDS) formulae would apply.

The desktop analysis was unable to identify any active livestock facilities or manure storage facilities within the subject lands (Figure 8). However, there appear to be several livestock operations and associated manure storage facilities on the east side of Penetanguishene Road. These facilities will require MDS calculations before they can be integrated into the settlement area. However, considering their location on the edge of the subject lands, it is not anticipated that MDS setbacks will significantly impact the total area of land to be added.

Figure 9: Aerial imagery of the subject area used to assess the presence of livestock operations



### 2.3.2.1 (g) The new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development.

As shown in Figure 5, this report recommends the establishment of a long-term transition zone overlay between the existing urban boundary and the employment lands adjacent to Highway 400. The transition zone between the existing residential neighbourhoods and the proposed Employment Area is intended to act as a buffer and ensure a logical progression of urban development.

Phasing policies will be included in the Official Plan Amendment to ensure that there is no “leapfrog” development which could create isolated agricultural parcels. The Official Plan Amendment will also specify that development cannot proceed until a subsequent planning process has been completed for the subject lands. These policy-led guardrails will ensure that infrastructure and community services are available as development progresses.

## 3.2 Servicing Analysis

A high-level review of water and wastewater servicing capacity for the Midhurst community was completed to inform the Township’s long-term growth planning and to evaluate the feasibility of servicing the proposed Employment Area expansion. Midhurst is anticipated to remain the Township’s primary focus for both residential and employment development, and major upgrades to the municipal servicing network are currently underway. These include expanded groundwater

supply, new and upgraded water treatment infrastructure, increased storage, and the introduction of a municipal wastewater treatment system for the first time in the community. In this context, the servicing review provides a planning-level basis to understand whether municipal services can be extended to support a proposed 280-hectare Employment Area east of the existing settlement boundary.

Midhurst's existing water system is a groundwater-based network supplied by three water treatment plants (Idlewood, Greenpine, and Carson Road), four production wells, two elevated standpipes providing approximately 2,075 m<sup>3</sup> of storage, and two booster pumping stations. Existing system capacities across the Idlewood, Greenpine, and Carson Road supply zones range from 1,642 m<sup>3</sup>/day to 3,498 m<sup>3</sup>/day. Planned upgrades include two major new water treatment facilities: the Midhurst Valley WTP (commissioned in 2022) and the Doran Road WTP (Phase 1 commissioning planned for 2026). The Doran Road system is planned to include three wells with any two capable of supplying 100 L/s, supported by two additional wells at Old Second South Road providing a minimum of 80 L/s, along with in-ground storage planned at 4,470 m<sup>3</sup> and expandable to 6,000 m<sup>3</sup>. These improvements are intended to support growth in the Midhurst Heights area and additional urban development areas over the long term.

To estimate servicing needs associated with the proposed employment lands, standard employment-area assumptions were applied (15 persons per hectare and 150 L/person/day). On this basis, the 280-hectare area is projected to accommodate approximately 4,245 employees and generate an Average Day Demand of 7.37 L/s, increasing to 13.27 L/s under Maximum Day Demand conditions. Relative to the planned Doran Road supply capacity (approximately 180 L/s combined well capacity), the projected employment-area demand represents a modest proportion of anticipated long-term capacity.

Wastewater servicing in Midhurst is also undergoing major expansion. A new municipal wastewater treatment plant is under construction to service the Midhurst Urban Settlement Area, supported by the Midhurst Heights Sewage Pumping Station and forcemain system conveying flows from the Doran Road development area. Phase 1 of the WWTP, planned for commissioning in 2028 or 2029 is expected to provide 2,500 m<sup>3</sup>/day (74.8 L/s) of treatment capacity, with an ultimate expansion planned to 12,314 m<sup>3</sup>/day (142 L/s). Using a standard equivalency between water demand and wastewater generation for this planning-level assessment, the projected Maximum Day wastewater flow associated with the Employment Area (13.27 L/s) represents approximately 10% of Phase 1 capacity and approximately 5% of ultimate capacity.

Overall, the servicing review indicates that future upgrades underway in Midhurst are sufficient to accommodate the needs of the subject lands. Planned additions—including the Doran Water Treatment Plant, expanded well capacity, new storage facilities, and the new municipal wastewater treatment plant provide servicing capacity beyond the site's predicted maximum day water demand and associated wastewater flows.

Further detailed engineering work will be required to confirm servicing approaches, fire flow availability, network modelling, and capacity allocation as implementation advances; however, the available information supports the feasibility of accommodating the proposed employment expansion within the planned servicing framework.

### 3.3 Fiscal Impact Analysis

A fiscal impact analysis was prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. to assess the long-term financial implications of accommodating Springwater's population and employment growth to 2056. The analysis evaluates how new development will influence the Township's capital program, operating budget, and taxation base, and provides a high-level understanding of whether future growth will be fiscally self-sustaining under current municipal service levels and funding structures. The full report is attached as Appendix D.

The fiscal analysis considers two primary components of growth: development within the Township's existing settlement areas to 2056, and the potential expansion of the settlement boundary to accommodate additional employment lands. For both components, the study examines growth-related capital costs, operating expenditures, lifecycle (asset replacement) costs, and anticipated revenues from property taxation and user rates. Capital cost estimates were prepared at a high level and assume that growth-related infrastructure would be funded through development charges or developer-funded works, with the Township assuming long-term responsibility for maintenance and replacement.

For growth within the existing settlement areas, the analysis concludes that development would result in a modest net annual deficit on the tax-supported operating budget of \$530,000 (rounded) per year at build-out, which would require an increase in taxes of about 2% (based on the 2025 tax rate).<sup>8</sup> The deficit on the tax-supported budget reflects the ongoing cost of providing municipal services relative to revenues generated under current tax rates.

The fiscal impacts associated with the potential employment lands expansion were also assessed. This analysis indicates that, while employment growth contributes positively to the Township's assessment base, the expansion area would still generate a modest annual deficit on both the tax-supported and rate-supported budgets at build-out, according to current assumptions. Based on the analysis, the addition of the 280 hectares of employment lands results in an overall annual deficit of \$612,000, requiring a 3% tax increase overall (i.e., inclusive of the 2% identified for growth within the settlement area). The report notes that actual outcomes will be influenced by the timing of development, the mix of employment uses, and future updates to water and wastewater rates to reflect servicing demands and cost recovery objectives.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that this calculation is a snapshot in time and is based on 2025 tax rates.

The Watson analysis references the “Municipal Study – 2024” prepared by BMA Management Consulting Inc. This annual study reviews residential, industrial, and commercial tax rates across the Province. Based on a review of the 2024 study, Watson notes that Springwater’s residential tax rate is among the lowest in the Province and is 65% lower than the average residential rate in Ontario. Further, commercial tax rates are 69% below the average rate, and industrial tax rates are 171% below the average rate.

Overall, the fiscal impact analysis demonstrates that while growth can be accommodated within Springwater, long-term fiscal sustainability will be influenced by municipal policy decisions related to taxation, user rates, service levels, and growth management.

## 4 Considerations for Springwater

As part of the 2026 GMS, the lands at Highway 400 and Forbes Road (shown in Figure 3) are proposed to be added to the Midhurst Settlement Area and planned for Employment Area uses. The recommended approach involves updating the Township of Springwater's Official Plan Schedules to expand the Municipal Settlement Area Boundary by approximately 280 hectares. While these lands will be brought into the Settlement Area, they will retain their current land use designations (i.e., primarily 'Agricultural' and 'Aggregate Extractive') and be permitted to continue operating unaffected by these changes until such time as the lands are deemed necessary for development. This ensures that the Township protects strategically located employment lands for future economic uses without prematurely redesignating them or servicing them.

The remaining lands along the Highway 400 corridor, located immediately south of the lands at Highway 400 and Forbes Road, would be identified as 'Long Term Transition Lands' and 'Long Term Employment Reserve' using an overlay. This overlay mechanism would function as an additional layer of policy direction that sits "on top of" existing Official Plan designations, signaling the long-term intent for these lands. These lands will remain outside of the Settlement Area boundary with their current permissions retained until such time as the Township deems it necessary to bring them into the Settlement Area Boundary.

The inclusion of flexible land use policies for these areas will help prevent the establishment of incompatible interim development while maintaining the long-term ability of these lands to accommodate employers who may be attracted by the Highway 400 interchange's strong goods-movement accessibility. This forward-looking approach directly aligns with PPS 2024 policies that allow municipalities to plan for Employment Areas and supporting infrastructure beyond a 30-year horizon.

The PPS 2024 also emphasizes efficient land use, phasing, and the need to prioritize development within existing serviced areas, enabling municipalities to defer the redesignation of future employment lands until market conditions justify their development. This approach enables the Township to establish a comprehensive phasing strategy to plan for future servicing and development in a manner consistent with PPS 2024's direction to implement phasing and servicing strategies, where appropriate (Policy 2.3.1.6). Future master planning exercises can also evaluate water and wastewater servicing options, stormwater management requirements, transportation improvements, and public service facility needs to support development as it becomes viable.

To support this staged approach, it is recommended that the Township undertake future planning exercises which can outline the phased vision for these lands. Detailed land use mapping, urban design direction, and other implementation tools will be utilized to establish development sequencing and provide direction for achieving a complete, competitive Employment Area.

## 5 Conclusions and Next Steps

### *Conclusion*

This report recommends that the lands surrounding the Highway 400 and Forbes Road interchange be incorporated into the Midhurst Settlement Area to support the Township's long-term employment objectives. The analysis demonstrates that these lands represent a strategically located Employment Area, directly aligned with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024, which encourages municipalities to identify and preserve employment lands along major goods-movement corridors and to plan proactively beyond a 30-year horizon. Their inclusion ensures that Springwater can protect a critical economic asset, position itself for future industrial and logistics investment, and balance anticipated residential growth with local employment opportunities.

### *Key Findings*

- **Residential Land Supply:** The Growth Management Study confirms that the Township of Springwater has a sufficient supply of designated community lands to accommodate forecasted population growth to the 2056 planning horizon and beyond, with no demonstrated need for a settlement area boundary expansion to support residential development.
- **Employment Land Requirement:** The land needs assessment identifies a requirement for approximately 81 gross hectares of additional employment lands to accommodate forecasted employment growth to 2056, particularly for land-intensive employment uses.
- **Transition to a Growth Community:** Springwater is continuing its transition from a predominantly rural and agricultural municipality to a growth community, with an anticipated population of approximately 32,500 residents and 9,190 jobs by 2051 and 33,670 residents and 9,520 jobs by 2056. This growth reflects regional market pressures and the Township's evolving role within Simcoe County.
- **Complete Community Objective:** Coordinating the Township's evolving economic role with its long-term housing supply is essential to achieving complete communities, supporting local employment opportunities, reducing commuting pressures, and ensuring balanced and sustainable growth.
- **Strategic Employment Location:** The recommended settlement area expansion focused on lands surrounding the Highway 400 and Forbes Road interchange represents a strategic location for long-term employment growth. The site benefits from direct access to a major goods-movement corridor and supports the broader Regional Market Area (RMA) of Barrie and Simcoe County.
- **Agricultural Findings:** A desktop analysis of agricultural impacts was undertaken, which confirmed that approximately 60% of the lands proposed to be added are prime agricultural lands (50% of the lands are lower-quality, Class 5-7 lands). The impacts to

these lands are largely unavoidable given the constraints surrounding the Midhurst Settlement Area and can be minimized and mitigated through subsequent planning processes. Potential agricultural impacts are primarily related to land fragmentation, which can be addressed through detailed design, buffering, and phasing. A full Agricultural Impact Assessment, along with detailed MDS calculations, may be required at future planning stages to further assess and mitigate impacts in accordance with Provincial policy.

- **Servicing Findings:** A high-level review of water and wastewater servicing capacity for the Midhurst community was undertaken, which indicates that major servicing upgrades currently underway or planned in Midhurst, including new water treatment facilities, expanded groundwater supply, additional storage, and the introduction of a municipal wastewater treatment plant, provide a framework that can ultimately support the proposed Employment Area. While the subject lands are not currently serviced and are not included in existing master plans due to their location outside the settlement boundary, the analysis demonstrates that projected employment-related water and wastewater demand represent a manageable proportion of planned ultimate system capacity. Detailed engineering, servicing allocation, and network modeling will be required through future planning exercises to confirm timing, capacity, and phasing.
- **Fiscal Findings:** A fiscal impact analysis was prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. The analysis concludes that the proposed employment land expansion can be accommodated over the long term, but that full build-out of the additional employment lands would result in a modest operating deficit under current municipal tax structures. The analysis identifies that Springwater's residential, commercial, and industrial tax rates are among the lowest in Ontario, which limits full cost recovery for infrastructure and service provision associated with long-term employment growth. While no immediate fiscal impact is anticipated, the study notes that future adjustments to tax rates or development phasing may be required as employment lands are developed beyond the 2056 horizon to ensure fiscal sustainability. Overall, the findings support a phased and strategic approach to employment land development aligned with infrastructure delivery and long-term financial planning.

### *Next Steps*

- **Council Endorsement:** Following Council endorsement of the Growth Management Study, the Township will proceed with implementation of the study's recommendations.
- **Initiation of the Official Plan Amendment (OPA) Process / Formal Public Engagement and Consultation:** The Township will initiate the OPA process to implement the recommended settlement area expansion for employment lands and to bring the Township Official Plan into conformity with a 2056 planning horizon, consistent with Provincial policy. To kick-off the OPA process, the Township will launch a public engagement strategy, including consultation with residents, landowners, stakeholders, Indigenous communities, and agencies, to gather input and inform the refinement of draft policies.
- **Additional Supporting Studies:** As the recommendations advance, further detailed studies may be required at this stage or future stages, including a full Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), detailed Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) calculations, refined servicing and transportation analyses, and environmental investigations. An assessment of other land use constraints/conflicts that impact potential uses within the Employment Area may also be conducted at this stage. County and agency comments will help inform the scope and sequencing of this work.
- **Draft Official Plan Amendment Policies/Conformity Exercise:** Based on the results of the preceding steps, including consultation feedback, the Official Plan Amendment policies will be drafted. A conformity exercise will be undertaken to ensure the proposed OPA is consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024, including policies related to long-term planning horizons, employment lands, settlement area boundary expansions, and complete communities. It should be noted that this will represent an amendment to the OP2031, as it has not yet been approved by the County of Simcoe and is not in-effect. Nonetheless, through discussions with Township staff, it was determined that updating the OP2031 was required for PPS consistency. The Official Plan Amendment will be presented to Council in Spring 2026.
- **County Official Plan Amendment:** A County Official Plan Amendment will also be required to enable the proposed settlement area expansion. Ongoing coordination with Simcoe County will be necessary to align the Township's OPA with updated County-level population and employment forecasts and policy direction.
- **Council Approval:** Following completion of the OPA process, including public consultation, agency and County review, and finalization of draft policies the Official Plan Amendment will be brought forward to Township Council for consideration and adoption. Council adoption of the OPA will confirm the Township's long-term growth strategy to the 2056 horizon, including the proposed employment land expansion, subject to approval of the corresponding County Official Plan Amendment and any conditions arising from that process.