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**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Jennifer Staden, Manager of Planning Services &  
Deborah-Ann Liske, Senior Planner

**Date:** March 18, 2026

**Subject:** Growth Management Study (GMS) Update and  
Recommendations

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### Report Highlights

- The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update and recommendations related to the Township's Growth Management Study (GMS) being undertaken by consulting firms, WSP Canada Inc. (WSP), and Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson).
- Following a presentation to Council and direction in June 2025, WSP and Watson have now completed all background work associated with the GMS including:
  - Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment (Watson & Associates)
  - Water and Wastewater Servicing Analysis (WSP)
  - Fiscal Impact Analysis (Watson & Associates)
  - GMS Final Recommendation Report (WSP)
- The analysis represents a projection and forecasting of the Township's Residential and Employment land needs to the year 2051, in alignment with the County of Simcoe's current projections, and to 2056, in alignment with the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) 30-year planning horizons.
- Watson & Associates Growth Forecast indicates Springwater Township is expected to reach a population of 32,500 by 2051 and 33,670 by 2056.
- This forecast represents an increase of 11,050 people by 2056 at an average annual growth rate of 1.2%.
- In accordance with the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024, municipalities must plan for and accommodate a residential land supply of at least 20-years, but not more than 30-years (section 2.1.3). However, this same policy provides additional provision to allow municipalities to plan for Employment and Infrastructure uses beyond the 30-year limitation.
- For Residential Land, Watson & Associates Land Needs Assessment (LNA) determined Springwater Township has a significant supply of planned housing units sufficient to meet the forecasted 2056 residential demand.

- Accordingly, no expansion to the Township’s existing settlement area boundaries is required to accommodate the anticipated residential growth to 2056.
- However, when considering the need for Employment Land, Watson’s Assessment determined there is a need for 81 hectares (200 acres) of additional Employment Land to support the Township’s growth to the 2056 horizon.
- Based on the need for additional Employment Lands beyond the current settlement area boundaries, the WSP project team identified and reviewed options for recommended Employment Areas in the Township.
- To support good planning principles and Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024 policies, priority was allocated to locations adjacent to existing Settlement Areas, with access to full servicing and in close proximity to ‘major goods movement corridors’.
- The WSP project team identified the Midhurst Settlement Area for its servicing expansion potential and its proximity to major goods movement corridors (i.e. Highway 26 / Highway 400). Two potential options were identified as follows:
  - West Option - Highway 26 between Midhurst and Minesing
  - East Option - Forbes Road to Highway 400
- Based on the planned servicing infrastructure and investment allocated to the ‘Craig Road / Forbes Road extension’, extensive goods movement corridor of Highway 400, relatively flat contours, reduced agricultural impact and minimal Natural Heritage constraints, the Forbes Road / Highway 400 interchange area was identified as the optimal location for an Employment Lands expansion.
- WSP’s recommendation is consistent with previous Council direction (resolution C061-2025) to explore strategic employment opportunities east of Midhurst.
- While the Land Needs Assessment identified the need for a minimum of 81 hectares (200 acres) of additional Employment Land, WSP has confirmed use of PPS provision 2.1.3 permitting Employment Area planning to extend beyond the 30-year horizon is appropriate considering:
  - The Province specifically permits municipalities to plan beyond the 30-year horizon for Employment Areas underlining the importance of protecting strategic employment assets for the long term.
  - Locating Employment Areas in close proximity to ‘major goods movement corridors’ reduces land use conflicts and traffic within residential and community areas.
  - The Highway 400 / Forbes Road interchange is able to serve a larger County of Simcoe Regional Market Area (RMA).
  - Additional employment uses support the provision of efficient water / wastewater servicing to the area
  - A larger Employment Area is expected to provide greater ‘critical mass’ in attracting investment and Economic Development.

- The planned 'Craig Road / Forbes Road extension' infrastructure project creates a significant transportation link and bypass from Highway 27 to Highway 400.
- Existing Aggregate Operations located at 1742 and 1888 Penetanguishene Road
  - Marginalized soil class (Class 5-7 soils) east of Highway 400.
  - Aggregate (sand & gravel) pits can be rehabilitated for Industrial and Employment Business Park uses (E.g. Bertram Industrial Parkway).
- MNR Transitional Lands located at 1697 Forbes Road
  - Operated by the Ministry of Natural Resources for long term Agricultural 'test plots' this parcel represents an appropriate 1000m long-term buffer and transition between the Employment Area and planned residential neighbourhoods west of Russell Road.
- Accordingly, WSP has identified and recommended a total Employment Expansion area of 280-hectares (692 acres) centred around the Highway 400 and Forbes Road Interchange and has further recommended identifying a 'Long Term Employment Reserve Area' overlay along both sides of Highway 400 south to Partridge Road.
- While a Settlement Area expansion for the extended 'Reserve Area' is not required for the current planning horizon, identifying and preserving these lands represents a recognition of their importance for Local and Regional Employment Uses and allows for longer term Engineering and Infrastructure planning.
- To enable and move forward with WSP's recommended 280-hectare (692 acres) employment land expansion, Council's endorsement and direction is required to initiate a formal Planning Act process. The process would include consultation with the public, Indigenous groups, agencies and authorities to undertake formal amendments to the Township's Official Plan.
- Should Council provide endorsement, Staff will engage with the County of Simcoe as the approval authority to ensure conformity with applicable legislation and to facilitate any associated County Official Plan Amendment (COPA).

## **Recommendation**

That the report from the Manager of Planning Services and Senior Planner regarding the Township's Growth Management Study Update and Recommendations dated March 18, 2026 be received; and,

That the GMS Final Recommendation Report, Servicing Analysis, Growth Forecast, Land Needs Assessment, Fiscal Impact Analysis and presentation prepared by WSP and Watson & Associates be received; and,

That Council endorse the findings and recommendations of WSP's Growth Management Study and direct staff to initiate a formal Planning Act process to undertake amendments to the Township's Official Plan to:

- i. Bring the Official Plan into conformity with Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024.
- ii. Extend the Township's current planning horizon and growth forecasts.
- iii. Expand the Midhurst Settlement Area boundary for Employment Lands at the Forbes Road / Highway 400 interchange.
- iv. Identify a 'Long Term Employment Reserve Area' overlay along Highway 400 south to Partridge Road.
- v. Incorporate updated municipal boundary mapping as per Bill 76; and,

That Council authorize staff to engage with the County of Simcoe to initiate any associated County Official Plan Amendment (COPA); and,

That Council directs staff to upload the GMS materials to the Township's website to initiate public consultation and engagement.

## **Background**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update and recommendations related to the Township's Growth Management Study (GMS) being undertaken by consulting firms, WSP Canada Inc. (WSP), and Watson & Associates (Watson).

Under the Planning Act, the Township is required to regularly review and update its Official Plan to conform with the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) and the Official Plan of the Upper-Tier Municipality, being the Simcoe County Official Plan. The Township's current Official Plan was adopted in 2023, prior to the updated PPS and Simcoe County Plan Amendment 7 (SCOPA 7) which is currently awaiting Provincial approval. The updated PPS requires municipalities to forecast growth and provide for a sufficient supply of land for at least 20-years, but not more than 30-years (the 'Planning Horizon'), whereas the current forecast in the Township Official Plan is to the year 2031.

Accordingly, the Township has undertaken a Growth Management Study (GMS) to provide the necessary background information and analysis required for an update to the Official Plan. This analysis includes growth forecasting of the Township's Residential and Employment land needs to the year 2051, in alignment with the County of Simcoe's current plan projections through SCOPA 7, and to 2056, in alignment with the new 30-year planning horizons required by PPS 2024.

## **Growth Management Study (GMS) Chronology**

In September 2024, WSP and Watson & Associates were awarded the contract for the Township's Growth Management Study (GMS). WSP commenced their work in January

2025 with a review and summary of the current policy and legislative framework, SCOPA 7, and previous Township planning exercises.

On February 5, 2025, Council passed resolution C061-2025 which directed WSP through staff, to prioritize the focus of the study to a potential expansion of the Midhurst Settlement Area eastwards to Highway 400 and to report back to Council by June 2025.

This initial direction resulted in WSP's preparation of a GMS Background Report (May 2025) and a Focused Study Areas for Growth Memo (May 22, 2025).

On June 4, 2025, WSP made a presentation to Council summarizing their background analysis and outlining the work necessary to consider and support an expansion of the Midhurst Settlement Area including:

- A Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment to project population growth to 2056 and to determine the quantum of residential and employment land needed to meet forecasted growth.
- A Fiscal Impact Analysis to assess the impact of development on services provided by the Township and to determine capital and operating expenditure implications.
- A Water and Wastewater Servicing Analysis to identify servicing constraints and confirm if potential expansions could be appropriately and efficiently serviced by extensions of existing and planned municipal services.

A copy of Council Resolution C061-2025, the GMS Background Report (May 2025), Focused Study Areas for Growth Memo (May 22, 2025) and WSP Presentation to Council (June 2025) are attached hereto in the Background Section at the end of this report.

### **Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment (Watson)**

Following WSP's June 2025 presentation, Watson & Associates (Watson) prepared a Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment (LNA) dated January 8, 2026.

This assessment represents a population projection and forecasting of the Township's Residential and Employment land needs to the year 2051, in alignment with the County of Simcoe's current projections (SCOPA 7), and to 2056, in alignment with the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS 2024) 30-year planning horizons.

#### **Residential Land Needs**

Watson & Associates Growth Forecast indicates that Springwater Township is expected to reach a population of 32,500 by 2051 and 33,670 by 2056. This forecast represents an increase of 11,050 people by 2056 at an average annual growth rate of 1.2%.

The forecasted population for Springwater Township is in line with the County of Simcoe’s projection of 32,500 at the 2051 planning horizon.

Watson’s assessment further estimates that the Township will continue to average higher building permit activity over the coming planning horizon, averaging 164 new residential units per year, compared to the Township’s historical 15-year average of 103 new units per year.

The LNA indicates that the demand for 164 new units per year results in a total need for approximately 5110 new units by 2056. As part of the assessment, Watson & Associates examined active development applications within the Township to determine the Township’s ability to meet this residential demand to 2056.

Figure 4 of the Land Needs Assessment details the Township’s residential unit supply across various stages of the development approvals process (i.e. registered, draft plan approved, etc.).

**Figure 4  
Township of Springwater  
Active Development Applications**

Status	Low Density	Medium Density	High Density	Total
Registered	1,068	0	0	1,068
Registered / Draft Approved	885	0	0	885
Draft Approved	3,660	1,446	82	5,188
In Progress, OPA / ZBA Approved	2,416	518	358	3,292
MZO Request	96	915	1,969	2,980
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,125</b>	<b>2,879</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>13,413</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data from the Township of Springwater, summarized by Watson & Associates Economists, 2025.

Excluding MZO requested units, the Township has a current supply of 10,433 units with significant reserves at each stage of the development process. Watson’s summary of Residential Land needs for Springwater Township is as follows:

*“Over the longer-term horizon to 2056, a residential unit surplus of approximately 9,140 units is anticipated. Scenario testing confirms that, even under the highest growth allocation (10% of County-wide growth), Springwater’s designated urban residential lands are sufficient to accommodate forecast housing demand to 2051. Based on this, there is no need for an urban boundary expansion to accommodate growth to 2056. The Township can continue to monitor the absorption of its D.G.A. lands against long-term demand for development in Springwater’s urban areas.”*

Based on the Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment (LNA) findings, Springwater Township has a significant supply of planned housing units sufficient to meet the forecasted 2056 residential demand. Accordingly, no expansion to the Township's existing settlement area boundaries is required to accommodate the anticipated residential growth to 2056.

### **Employment Land Needs**

With respect to Employment forecasts, Watson projects the Township will reach a total number of jobs of 9,190 by 2051 and 9,520 by 2056. This forecast represents an increase of 2,820 new jobs by 2056 at an average annual growth rate of 1.0%.

To meet the anticipated job growth demand, Watson & Associates considered the local industrial profile of the Township and Employment Area densities to determine there is a need for 81 hectares (200 acres) of additional Employment Land to support the Township's job growth to the 2056 horizon.

*"With respect to Employment Areas, Springwater needs an additional 81 gross ha of employment lands by 2056. Although the G.M.S. explores a land need to 2056, section 2.1.3 of the P.P.S., 2024 allows municipalities to plan beyond a 30-year planning horizon. Furthermore, to promote complete communities, sufficient Employment Areas should be planned alongside residential lands to maintain a healthy balance between jobs and residents. The Township should plan and conduct further analysis to expand its Employment Areas. Addressing these needs will require proactive planning through the O.P. review process to ensure the Township remains well-positioned to accommodate forecast growth to 2056 and beyond."*

The Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment prepared by Watson & Associates has been attached hereto as Appendix 'A'.

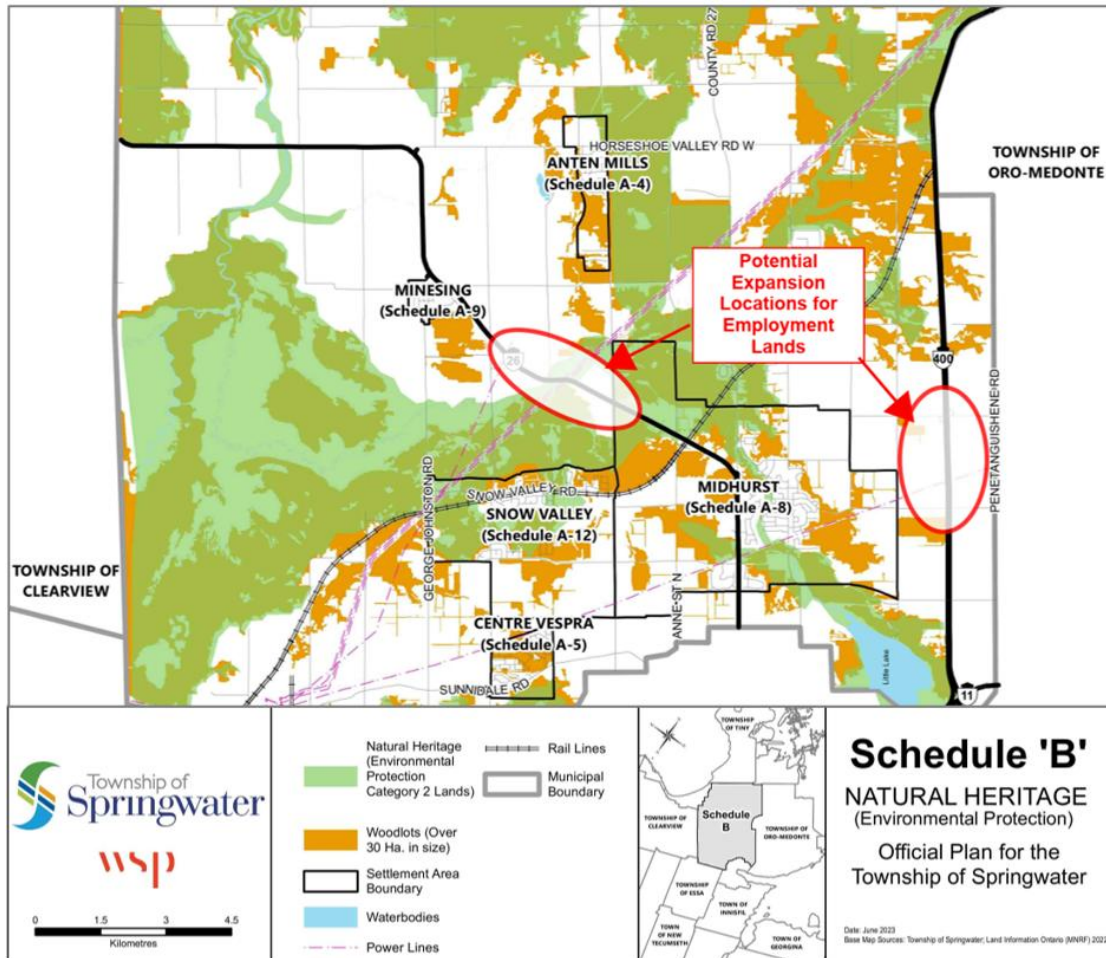
### **Growth Management Study Final Recommendations (WSP)**

Based on the findings of the Growth Forecast and Land Needs Assessment, WSP prepared a Growth Management Study Final Recommendation Report to review and explore options for new Employment Areas in the Township of Springwater.

The report outlines that, to support good planning principles and Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024 policies, priority was allocated to locations adjacent to existing Settlement Areas, with access to full servicing and in close proximity to 'major goods movement corridors'. The WSP project team identified the Midhurst Settlement Area for its servicing expansion potential and its proximity to major goods movement corridors (i.e. Highway 26 / Highway 400).

Two potential options for employment expansion in the Midhurst area were identified as follows:

- West Option - Highway 26 between Midhurst and Minesing
- East Option - Forbes Road to Highway 400



WSP outlined and considered the following high-level parameters when assessing the potential of the two proposed expansion areas:

- Access to a 'major goods movement corridor' (i.e. Highway 400 / Highway 26)
- Current or planned infrastructure investments
- Previous Council direction (Resolution C061-2025) directing review of strategic lands east of Midhurst
- Impact on the Agricultural and Natural Heritage systems
- Additional land use constraints (i.e. land contours, Hydro Corridor)
- Proximity to large Residential Land supplies to support 'complete community' principles.

## Highway 400 and Forbes Road Employment Expansion Area

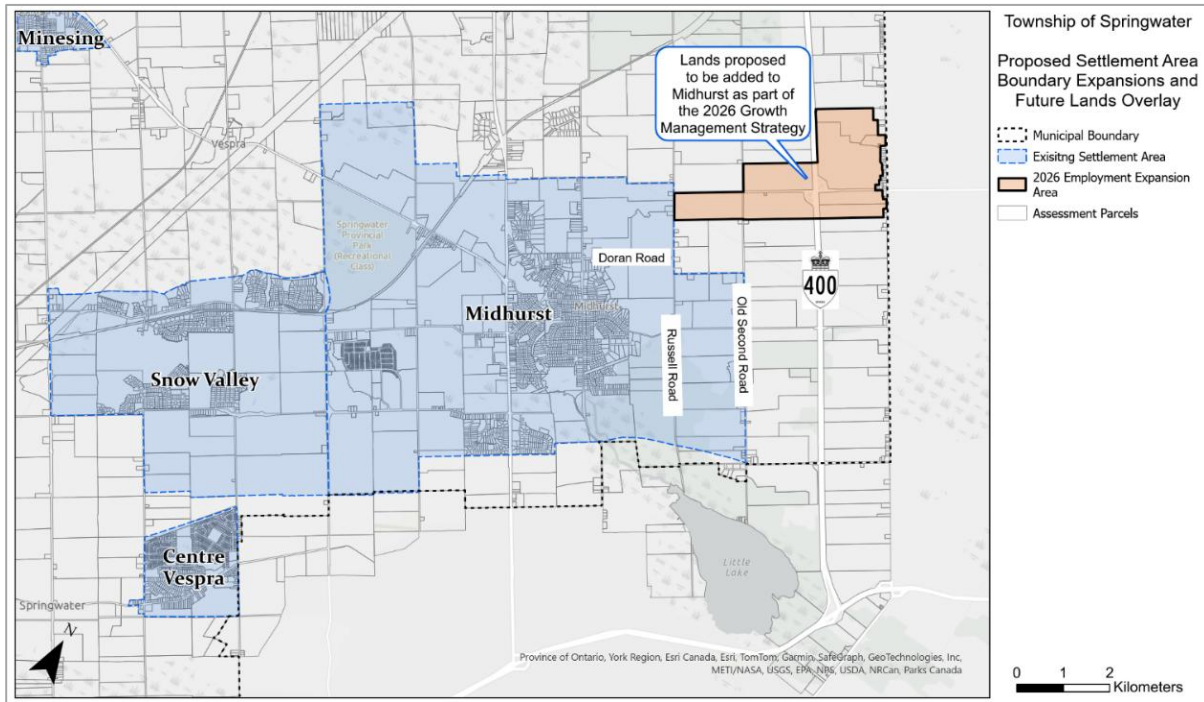
Based on the planned servicing infrastructure and investment allocated to the 'Craig Road / Forbes Road extension', extensive goods movement corridor of Highway 400, relatively flat contours, reduced agricultural impact and minimal Natural Heritage constraints, the Forbes Road / Highway 400 interchange area was identified as the optimal location for an Employment Lands expansion.

This recommendation is consistent with previous Council direction (resolution C061-2025) to explore strategic employment opportunities east of Midhurst.

While the Land Needs Assessment identified the need for a minimum of 81 hectares (200 acres) of additional Employment Land, WSP has confirmed use of PPS provision 2.1.3 permitting Employment Area planning to extend beyond the 30-year horizon is appropriate considering:

- The Province specifically permits municipalities to plan beyond the 30-year horizon for Employment Areas underlining the importance of protecting strategic employment assets for the long term.
- Locating Employment Areas in close proximity to 'major goods movement corridors' reduces land use conflicts and traffic within residential and community areas.
- The Highway 400 / Forbes Road interchange is able to serve a larger County of Simcoe Regional Market Area (RMA).
- Additional Employment uses support the provision of efficient water / wastewater servicing to the area.
- A larger Employment Area is expected to provide greater 'critical mass' in attracting investment and development.
- The planned 'Craig Road / Forbes Road extension' infrastructure project creates a significant transportation link and bypass from Highway 27 to Highway 400.
- Existing Aggregate Operations located at 1742 and 1888 Penetanguishene Road
  - Marginalized soil class (Class 5-7) east of Highway 400.
  - Aggregate (sand & gravel) pits can be rehabilitated for Industrial and Employment Business Park uses (E.g. Bertram Industrial Parkway).
- MNR Transitional Lands located at 1697 Forbes Road
  - Operated by the Ministry of Natural Resources for long term Agricultural 'test plots' this parcel represents an appropriate 1000m long-term buffer and transition between the Employment Area and planned residential neighbourhoods west of Russell Road.

Accordingly, WSP has identified and recommended a total Employment Expansion area of 280 hectares (692 acres) centred on the Highway 400 and Forbes Road Interchange as shown on the below Figure.



## Long Term Employment Reserve Overlay

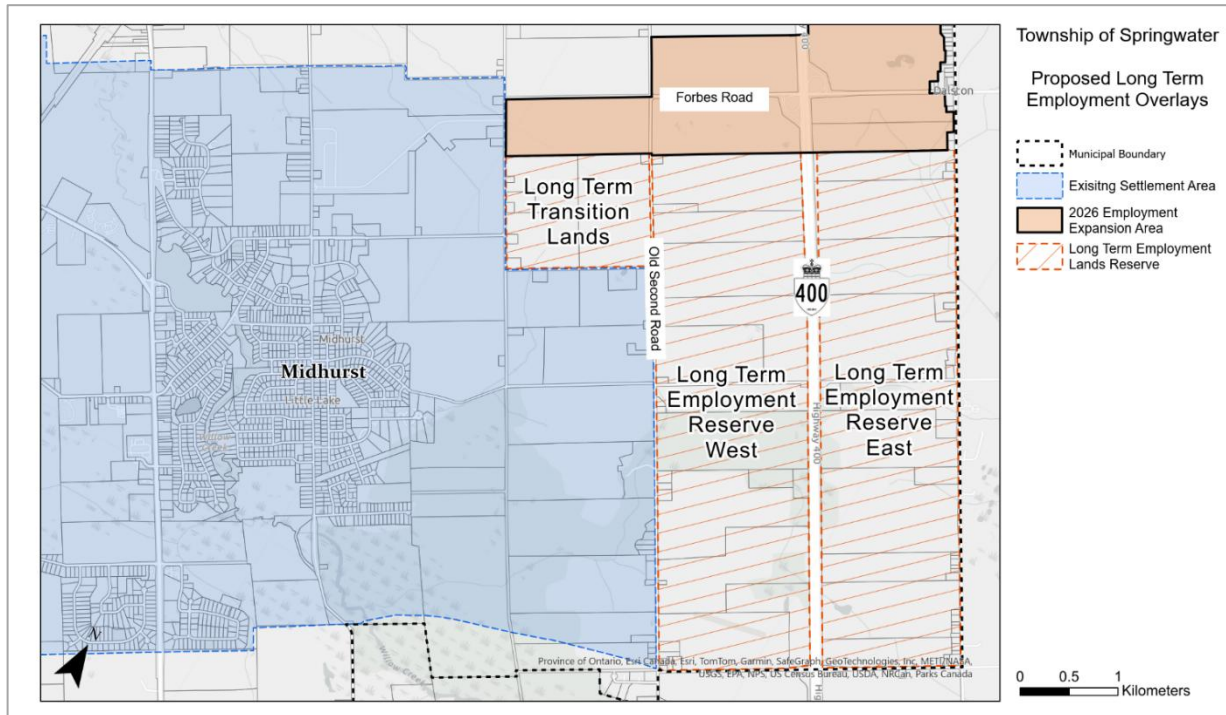
In addition to the proposed 280-hectare Employment Area Expansion, WSP further recommends the Township identify two additional policy overlay areas as follows:

- 'Long Term Employment Reserve Overlay'.
- 'Long Term Transition Lands Overlay'

The proposed policy overlay areas would signal and protect the long-term importance the Highway 400 corridor provides to the Township and greater Simcoe County Area but would not add these lands to the settlement area or convey any new land-use permissions at this time.

Lands in the 'Long-Term Employment Reserve Overlay' would be preserved for employment uses when future need is identified through subsequent growth exercises or as part of Regional Market Area (RMA) needs. While a Settlement Area expansion for the extended 'Reserve Area' is not required for the current planning horizon, identifying and preserving these lands represents a recognition of their importance for Local and Regional Employment Uses and allows for longer term Engineering and Infrastructure planning.

The proposed 'Reserve Area' would identify and protect both sides of Highway 400 south to Partridge Road as shown on the below Figure.



A copy of the GMS Final Recommendation Report prepared by WSP has been attached hereto as Appendix 'B'. A copy of the 280-hectare 'Employment Expansion Area' Figure and 'Long Term Employment Reserve Overlay' Figure have been attached hereto as Appendix 'C'.

## Water and Wastewater Servicing Analysis (WSP)

To support the 280-hectare Employment Expansion Area, WSP prepared a Servicing Analysis dated February 27, 2026.

The analysis considers existing and planned servicing available to the Midhurst Settlement Area and examines the water and wastewater servicing requirements of the proposed Employment Expansion. Key findings of the Servicing Analysis are as follows:

- Existing Linear Infrastructure
  - Water and sanitary servicing infrastructure associated with the 'Midhurst Heights' subdivision are currently located west of Russell Road and immediately adjacent to the proposed Employment Expansion Area. The presence of existing watermains and sanitary sewers provides an opportunity to efficiently extend linear infrastructure to the Employment Expansion Area.
- Water System Upgrades:
  - The anticipated future upgrades and expanded well supply and storage at the Doran Road Water Treatment Plant are expected to fully support the servicing needs of the Employment Expansion Area.

- Wastewater System Upgrades:
  - The planned Midhurst Wastewater Treatment Plant and associated infrastructure are anticipated to adequately support the servicing needs of the Employment Expansion Area.

The analysis concludes that existing and planned upgrades to the Doran Road Water Treatment Plant along with planned expansions of the Midhurst Wastewater Treatment Plant are sufficient to accommodate the anticipated daily water demand and associated wastewater flows of the Employment Expansion Area.

A copy of the Water and Wastewater Servicing Analysis prepared by WSP has been attached hereto as Appendix 'D'.

### **Fiscal Impact Analysis (Watson)**

A Fiscal Impact Analysis dated February 2026 was prepared by Watson & Associates to assess the long-term financial implications of accommodating Springwater's population and employment growth to 2056. The Analysis examines the financial impacts associated with development of the Township's current settlement area boundaries to 2056 as well as the proposed 280-hectare Employment Expansion Area of Midhurst.

#### **Fiscal Analysis – Current Settlement Area Boundaries**

Watson has determined that existing and planned development within the Township's current Settlement Area boundaries to 2056 would result in a net taxation deficit of approximately 2% from current taxation levels.

Throughout the analysis, Watson identified that residential growth tends to provide a slight net deficit on tax-supported budgets and accordingly highlights the importance for municipalities to plan for a mix of residential and non-residential uses.

#### **Fiscal Analysis – 280-hectare Employment Expansion Area**

When considering development of the proposed Employment Expansion Area to 2056, Watson finds a further net deficit of 1% from current levels. When considering the combined build-out of the current settlement area boundaries over the next 30 years and the Employment Expansion Area, Watson indicates that tax rates are within a cumulative 3% total of their long-term targets.

Typically, Industrial and Employment uses provide a net positive impact on tax-supported budgets, however, Watson cites the 2024 BMA Municipal Study which reviewed residential, industrial, and commercial tax rates across 126 municipalities in the Province of Ontario. Based on this review, Watson identified that Springwater's:

- Residential tax rates are approximately 65% below the average residential rate in Ontario.

- Commercial tax rates are approximately 69% below the average commercial rate.
- Industrial tax rates are approximately 171% below the average industrial rate.

Based on the BMA comparison, Springwater Township has the capacity to absorb the noted long term cumulative 3% tax deficit over current levels. Introducing additional Employment Land increases the proportion of assessment from employment uses and can help shift the tax burden from residential properties to employment properties.

It is important to note, the Fiscal Impact Analysis prepared by Watson represents a snapshot in time and projects taxation impacts over the next 30-year horizon. As the Township considers future rate adjustments and analysis on a phased growth approach, these projections will be revisited to provide an updated anticipated impact.

A copy of the Fiscal Impact Analysis prepared by Watson & Associates has been attached hereto as Appendix 'E'.

### **Provincial Planning Policy Analysis – Employment Area Expansion**

The Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (PPS) establishes the policy foundation for addressing Matters of Provincial Interest through land use planning and development. All decisions related to planning matters are required to be 'consistent' with the PPS. As discussed throughout this report, PPS 2024 provides greater flexibility for municipalities to plan beyond the 30-year planning horizon for Employment Areas (Section 2.1.3).

When considering expansions to Settlement Area Boundaries, Section 2.3.2.1 of PPS 2024 establishes seven (7) criteria that Planning Authorities shall consider as follows:

- a) *the need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses*
- b) *if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities*
- c) *whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas*
- 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*
- e) *whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation formulae*
- 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*

- g) the new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development*

Through the GMS Final Recommendations Report, WSP has addressed the applicable criteria, and a summary of the Settlement Area Expansion Policy Analysis has been attached hereto as Appendix 'F'.

## **Conclusion**

Township staff note that changes to the Provincial Planning Statement in October 2024 and removal of the former 'Growth Plan' and associated 'Provincially Significant Employment Zones' (PSEZs) have shifted the responsibility to recognize and protect strategic employment opportunities to the Local and Regional approval authorities.

Further, staff note several pieces of economic legislation passed by the Province of Ontario in 2025 signal a shift to provide municipalities with additional legislative solutions to economic pressures including:

- *Bill 5 - Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, 2025*
- *Special Economic Zones Act, 2025*
- *Bill 60 - Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act, 2025*
- *Bill 17 - Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025*

Staff are of the opinion that the proposed 280-hectare Employment Expansion Area recommended by WSP and Watson & Associates allows Springwater to recognize and protect a key economic asset for long-term employment opportunities at an appropriate buffer (1000m) distance from planned residential uses. The expansion area would provide the Township a competitive edge in attracting large scale employers and supporting Economic Development opportunities.

## **Next Steps**

Should Council endorse the recommendations of the GMS Report, staff will initiate the process for an Official Plan Amendment (OPA) and formally commence a public engagement and consultation phase.

Based on feedback received through a follow-on consultation process, policies will be prepared to support, phase and appropriately service the Employment Expansion Area. A conformity exercise will be undertaken to ensure the Official Plan is consistent with and conforms to, applicable upper-tier policies.

Any draft policy amendments and associated mapping changes will be brought forward to Township Council for consideration and adoption. If adopted by Township Council, the amendments would be sent to the County of Simcoe for final approval.

In addition, the Official Plan Amendment process represents an opportunity to incorporate the Township's revised municipal boundary as per Bill 76 (*Barrie - Oro-Medonte – Springwater Boundary Adjustment Act*) into Official Plan Mapping.

Accordingly, Township staff recommend the following:

That the report from the Manager of Planning Services and Senior Planner regarding the Township's Growth Management Study Update and Recommendations dated March 18, 2026 be received; and,

That the GMS Final Recommendation Report, Servicing Analysis, Growth Forecast, Land Needs Assessment, Fiscal Impact Analysis and presentation prepared by WSP and Watson & Associates be received; and,

That Council endorse the findings and recommendations of WSP's Growth Management Study and direct staff to initiate a formal Planning Act process to undertake amendments to the Township's Official Plan to:

- i. Bring the Official Plan into conformity with Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024.
- ii. Extend the Township's current planning horizon and growth forecasts.
- iii. Expand the Midhurst Settlement Area boundary for Employment Lands at the Forbes Road / Highway 400 interchange.
- iv. Identify a 'Long Term Employment Reserve Area' overlay along Highway 400 south to Partridge Road.
- v. Incorporate updated municipal boundary mapping as per Bill 76; and,

That Council authorize staff to engage with the County of Simcoe to initiate any associated County Official Plan Amendment (COPA); and,

That Council directs staff to upload the GMS materials to the Township's website to initiate public consultation and engagement.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no immediate financial impacts to the Township beyond staff time required to facilitate the process. The Township Growth Management Study being undertaken by WSP Canada Inc. and Watson & Associates continues to be within their approved work plan and budget.

While potential fiscal impacts associated with the 2056 forecasted growth and 280-hectare Employment Expansion Area have been outlined in Watson's Fiscal Impact Analysis for consideration, any potential tax rate adjustments would occur through normal budget process on an 'as required' and phased approach.

### Strategic Priorities/Goals

The above initiative supports the following Strategic Priorities/Goals:

- Goal 1 - Leveraging growth to improve Springwater as a community.
- Goal 2 - Leveraging growth to improve Springwater's economy.
- Goal 3 - Building community unity to support a sense of place.

### Approvals

<b>Submitted by:</b>	Jennifer Staden, Manager of Planning Services Deborah-Ann Liske, Senior Planner
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Chris Russell, Director of Planning and Development
<b>Financial Implications Reviewed by:</b>	Andrea Garner, Dipl. M.A, Manager of Taxation and Revenue / Deputy Treasurer
<b>Approved by:</b>	Stacey Forfar RPP, MBA, Chief Administrative Officer
<b>Version Code:</b>	C04 2026-03-08 3:55PM 3334494 <small>SHARED\C - Council, Boards, By-Laws and Resolutions\C04 Reports to Council\Planning Department\2026\2016-03-18 PR - GMS Update and Recommendations</small>

### Applicable Municipal Policy or Legislation

- Planning Act, R.S.O.1990
- Provincial Planning Statement (2024)
- County of Simcoe Official Plan
- Township of Springwater Official Plan
- Midhurst Secondary Plan

### Attachments

- Appendix A - Growth Forecast and Land Needs Analysis (Watson & Associates)
- Appendix B - GMS Final Recommendation Report (WSP)
- Appendix C - Employment Expansion Area and Reserve Overlay (WSP)
- Appendix D - Water and Wastewater Servicing Analysis (WSP)
- Appendix E - Fiscal Impact Analysis (Watson & Associates)
- Appendix F - Settlement Area Expansion Policy Analysis (PPS 2024)

## **Background or Relevant Reports on Subject**

- [Council Resolution C061-2025 – February 5, 2025](#)
- [Growth Management Study \(GMS\) Background Report - May 2025](#)
- [Focused Study Areas for Growth Memo - May 22, 2025](#)
- [WSP Presentation to Council – June 4 2025](#)

**Appendix F: Settlement Area Expansion Policy Analysis (PPS 2024)**

Provincial Planning Statement 2024	Summary of WSP Policy Analysis (Section 3 of GMS Final Recommendation Report)
<p>Section 2.3.2.1 - <i>In identifying a new settlement area or allowing a settlement area boundary expansion, planning authorities shall consider the following:</i></p>	
<p><i>(a) The need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses</i></p>	<p>The Land Needs Assessment prepared by Watson determined that no additional urban lands are needed to accommodate residential growth to 2056, however the municipality will require 81 hectares (200 acres) of additional Employment Lands. As the PPS encourages municipalities to plan beyond the 30-year horizon for Employment Uses, the lands surrounding the Highway 400 &amp; Forbes Road interchange represent a strategic opportunity for long term growth.</p> <p>Additionally, as Midhurst is expected to see the majority of residential growth to 2056, planning for Employment Uses nearby supports the implementation of ‘complete community’ objectives.</p>
<p><i>(b) If there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities</i></p>	<p>The purpose of this criteria is to ensure that servicing is planned efficiently and cost effectively and to discourage “leap-frogging”. As detailed in the Servicing Analysis, water and sanitary servicing infrastructure is located in the ‘Midhurst Heights’ development, immediately adjacent to the proposed Employment Expansion Lands and are expected to be completed in 2026. Watermains and sanitary sewers are being constructed in this development, providing an opportunity for future servicing connections. The Servicing Analysis</p>

	<p>further concludes there is capacity at the Doran Road Water Treatment Plant and at the Midhurst Wastewater Treatment Plant, to service the needs of the Employment Expansion Area.</p> <p>The location of the Employment Expansion Area also efficiently leverages planned municipal road infrastructure in Midhurst as the planned ‘Craig Road / Forbes Road extension’ will create a significant transportation link between Highway 27 and Highway 400. This location maximizes the benefit of these planned transportation investments by supporting coordinated growth and improved access to the broader road network.</p>
<p><i>(c) Whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas</i></p>	<p>It has been confirmed through WSP’s desktop GIS analysis that the subject lands are not comprised of specialty crop areas.</p>
<p><i>(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</i></p> <p><i>(e) Whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation formulae</i></p>	<p>As detailed in WSP’s GMS Report, roughly half of the Employment Expansion Area would not be considered ‘prime agricultural areas’ due to the presence of existing Aggregate Pit Operations and marginalized soil qualities (Class 5-7) located east of Highway 400. As Midhurst is bordered on all sides by some form of ‘prime agricultural land’ or Natural Heritage constraint, it is unavoidable for an expansion to not impact some prime agricultural land.</p> <p>However, lands located at 1697 Forbes Road east of Russell Road are operated by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) for long term Agricultural ‘test plots’, and as such, this parcel represents an appropriate 1000m long-term buffer and transition between the</p>

<p><i>(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</i></p>	<p>Employment Area and planned residential neighbourhoods west of Russell Road. The lands being held in MNR ownership ensure their existing agricultural use will continue while acting as a buffer.</p> <p>Based on desktop analysis, Township staff estimate that the Employment Expansion Lands represent approximately 128 hectares (316 acres) of designated Agricultural lands, which equates to 0.55% of the total agricultural land base within the Township.</p> <p>WSP's GMS Report completed a preliminary desktop review of potential livestock sites and determined that minimum distance separation (MDS) calculations may be required, and this calculation can be completed as part of the subsequent planning approval process (Official Plan Amendment). WSP further notes in their report that it is not anticipated that MDS setbacks will significantly impact the total area of the land useful for Employment generating uses.</p> <p>WSP states that there are no anticipated impacts to the broader agri-food network and suggests that the inclusion of the Employment Expansion Area could complement the existing agricultural uses, such as promoting the development of food distribution hubs, processing facilities or agricultural suppliers in close proximity to agricultural areas.</p> <p>It is important to note that should these Employment Expansion Lands be added to the Midhurst Settlement Area, they will retain their current land use permissions until such time as private site-specific proposals from individual landowners or developers are presented to Council for consideration.</p>
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<p><i>(g) The new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development.</i></p>	<p>The location of the proposed Employment Expansion Lands is immediately adjacent to the Midhurst Settlement Area and the Midhurst Heights development, which represents a logical and efficient extension of planned services (roads and linear servicing infrastructure).</p> <p>Should the recommendations of the GMS receive Council endorsement, an Official Plan Amendment will need to be prepared to support, phase and appropriately service the Employment Expansion Area. The Official Plan Amendment will also specify that development cannot proceed until site-specific planning exercises and zoning amendments have been completed for the subject lands. These policy-led guardrails will ensure that infrastructure and community services are available as development progresses.</p>
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