

Greenbelt 2.0 Backgrounder

According to the Greenbelt Plan drafted in 2005, the Greenbelt's primary purpose is to:

- protect against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and support agriculture as the predominant use;
- give permanent protection to natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health and form the environmental framework around which major urbanization in south-central Ontario will be organized, and;
- provide for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resources uses.

Greenbelt 2.0 expansion areas have been identified according to the following criteria:

- 1) Areas included in the Places to Grow "Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe"
- 2) Natural heritage and agricultural lands under particular threat from poorly-planned development, including leap-frog and outward sprawling growth.
- 3) Areas to protect and improve the health of surface water and groundwater resources, restore ecological and watershed health, and reduce downstream flooding and pollution.

There is evidence of substantial leap-frog development happening in the following areas across southern Ontario: Brant County (Brantford region) and the Kitchener-Waterloo-Guelph region, including the Paris-Galt and Waterloo Moraines; the Simcoe agricultural lands, and; Northumberland County (Port Hope, Cobourg, and Clarington regions). These areas are considered the most vulnerable to future development because of their access to downtown Toronto along 400 series highways. In order to continue the provincial Greenbelt commitment, Greenbelt expansion is required in these regions.

Expansion along the Niagara Escarpment in Hamilton and Niagara and north to Georgian Bay are based on the boundaries set out for Niagara Escarpment protection in the original 1973 Niagara Escarpment Planning Area approved by the Ontario Legislature. This expansion is necessary to ensure the continued preservation of this important natural feature.

In addition to these outlying areas, the Greenbelt 2.0 expansion would protect 'whitebelt' areas just upstream of existing communities. According to regional growth plans for York, Peel, Durham, Halton and the city of Hamilton, collectively these five areas only require about 30-35% of the existing 'whitebelt', even when netting out all provincial features where development is not permitted. If 50% of the 'whitebelt' were included in the Greenbelt expansion, there would still be roughly 70,000 acres (28,000 ha) of land available for development.

Greenbelt Hotspots

Greenbelt protection is needed in areas experiencing significant development pressures. Some of these hotspots are: The Waterloo-Guelph-Brantford region (in particular the Paris-Galt and Waterloo Moraines); 'whitebelt' areas around the GTA; Rouge River mid-reach and headwater areas in York Region, including the Reesor Property in Markham; South Simcoe agricultural lands; Luther Marsh; North Oakville lands; the Niagara Escarpment extension north to Georgian Bay and in Hamilton and Niagara; the Silver Creek Wetlands in Collingwood; TRCA lands and major River Valleys in the GTA; Duffins Creek, Carruthers Creek, Seaton Lands, and potential Pickering Airport lands in Durham; Clarington wetlands and agricultural lands; and the Northumberland-Rice Lake extension and Lake Gibson-Lake Moody area in Thorold.