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Greenbelt Council

Conseil de la
ceinture de verdure

April 28, 2019

Honourable Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Re. Greenbelt Council Report #4

Dear Minister Clark,

It is my pleasure to send you the Greenbelt Council's fourth progress report as we proceed through our work program.

Sincerely,

David Crombie
Chair, Greenbelt Council

Copies to:

Laurie LeBlanc, Deputy Minister
Greenbelt Council Members
Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation CEO Ed McDonnell
Peter Norman, Vice President & Chief Economist, Altus Group,
Cherise Burda, Executive Director, Ryerson City Building Institute
Jeff Evenson, Director, and Keir Matthews-Hunter, Canadian Urban Institute
Greater Golden Horseshoe Stakeholders

Greenbelt Council for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Report #4 (April 2019)

Continuing its practice of distributing progress reports after each meeting, this is the fourth report of the Greenbelt Council. It communicates our work in considering matters of public interest with respect to Ontario's Greenbelt and the implementation of the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

At its meeting April 1, Council met with Peter Norman (Vice President & Chief Economist, Altus Group), Cherise Burda (Executive Director, Ryerson City Building Institute) and Jeff Evenson, (Director, Canadian Urban Institute) to talk about housing supply challenges and opportunities.

While Council heard a wide range of perspectives on housing supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, there was consensus around the table that a stable long-term policy environment is needed in order to build confidence for those investing in housing and related infrastructure, such as transit and piped services.

Council learned about an innovative case study, conducted by the Ryerson City Building Institute, which examined a broad range of opportunities for municipal intensification in Mississauga; opportunities that might ultimately translate into substantially reduced growth pressures on lands beyond the urban boundary.

This discussion leads Council to believe that housing supply challenges need to be addressed through a nuanced menu of provincial actions focused on: purpose built rental, missing middle densities, options for the growing senior demographic, and affordable/attainable housing. To that end, Council recommends the government ensure its anticipated Housing Supply Action Plan focus on building the right supply in the right locations at appropriate densities such that Greater Golden Horseshoe neighbourhoods offer a spectrum of housing options for a mix of income levels.

While much of what we heard has become part of the public discourse, I share with you the following areas of focus for your consideration.

Intensification first—While the Growth Plan calls for intensification first planning, significant new housing is being built in new planned subdivisions on the periphery of urban areas. The provincial government needs to renew its policy direction to focus growth on optimizing infrastructure—intensifying throughout the built-up area wherever there is surplus infrastructure capacity—especially higher order transit.

Purpose built long-term rental housing—Rental vacancy rates have remained well below what is considered to be a healthy market over the last decade. Nearly half of all renter households experience housing affordability stress, and nearly one quarter experience extreme affordability stress. The proportion of renters facing affordability stress is expected to grow without further

policy interventions. These could include making government lands available for long-term affordable housing, and partnering with the full range of community housing providers.

Gentle density—We hear that there are too many policies in core municipalities which serve to maintain single-family neighbourhoods (sometimes referred to as the “yellowbelt”) as static and inflexible, and only reluctantly allow medium-density into existing nodes and corridors. Meanwhile these neighbourhoods are losing population.

Gentle density in the form of contextually sensitive infill needs to be added to residential neighbourhoods across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. One way is through as-of-right zoning permitting new secondary suites, as well as triplexes and other small apartment buildings in appropriate locations. This type of density can integrate well within these stable neighbourhoods.

Innovation—The government should be encouraging innovation in housing design, construction and financing. By encouraging flexible spaces, using modular building forms and minimizing amenities construction costs can be lowered and could help developers bring more affordable / attainable housing on stream.

Low-density residential neighbourhoods, for example, are often full of small development sites where innovative modular construction should be encouraged. Also, with the number of seniors between 65 and 84 growing significantly over the next couple of decades innovative tenure and financing options, such as strata housing, home sharing and equity homes, are needed to encourage seniors to downsize while enabling them to remain in their neighbourhoods.