

HALTON HILLS INTENSIFIES: LEGO USED TO EXPLORE GROWTH OPTIONS

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The Town of Halton Hills is going to get more intense over the next few decades.

The town is in the final stages of completing the Intensification Opportunities Study, exploring the best ways to accommodate new housing within existing urban areas in Acton and Georgetown up to the year 2041.

"We tried to find a creative way to proactively engage people," Bronwyn Parker, manager of planning policy with the Town of Halton Hills, said.

Using satellite images of areas identified for intensification scaled so that Lego blocks could be used to mark condominiums and townhomes, town staff invited several groups, including members of the media, to show how and

where they would increase housing by 2041.

Though much of the land involved in the study is currently occupied, participants were asked to consider renovation and reuse of properties.

Growth isn't just happening in Halton Hills though, the province has set an intensification target for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, of which Halton Hills is a part, of 50 per cent growth in built-up areas with the other half to occur in areas not yet developed.

For the exercise, different coloured Lego blocks signified townhomes, containing roughly six units and occupied by approximately 20 people, and condos, with 30 units and occupied by a total of 60 residents. A third colour represented ground floor commercial spaces.

Areas identified for

intensification were selected based on:

- Areas that are already centres of activity with easy walking access;
- Properties that feature, or are planned to feature, a mix of uses;
- Properties close to the GO Transit stations;
- Properties large enough to accommodate intensification;
- Underutilized properties.

Of several community groups who participated in the exercise, seniors groups were reported by town staff to have considered purpose-built housing and mixed-use spaces, while youth groups considered long-term usage and affordability.

While both groups reached similar conclusions, youths also looked at how similar communities to Halton Hills chose to intensify.



Bryan Myers/Torstar

Local groups were given the opportunity to illustrate how they would grow urban areas of Halton Hills as part of an Intensification study looking at growth up to 2041.

Where seniors and youths differed, however, was a 15-storey condo building proposed by a local youth group for downtown Acton.

For me, I was tasked with intensifying a section of Georgetown, primarily located along Guelph Street. I chose to bring con-

dos with commercial spaces below along Guelph Street while adding townhomes in underused spaces, and additional condos where they already existed.

In total, by 2041, my intensification exercise saw an increase of 2,000 residents over the next 21 years.

Staff will announce the preliminary results of the study and feedback on Nov. 14, at the Helson Gallery (9 Church St.) between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. More information about the Intensification Opportunity Study is available at www.haltonhills.ca/paststudies/intensification.php.

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