

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

[ERO 019-6216 Proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Plan](#)

Supporting Document: Summary of Greenbelt Plan Policies

Established under the [Greenbelt Act, 2005](#), the Greenbelt is a broad band of protected land that:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of the agricultural land base and supports agriculture as the predominant land use
- Gives permanent protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human health and that form the environmental framework around which major urbanization in south-central Ontario will be organized
- Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation, and resource uses
- Builds resilience to and mitigates climate change
- Allows for critical new infrastructure and upgrades to existing infrastructure (subject to strong environmental conditions) to serve the substantial growth projected for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, to be permitted.

The [Greenbelt Plan](#) has two designations:

1. Protected Countryside
2. Urban River Valleys

The proposed addition to the Greenbelt would extend [Greenbelt Plan](#) coverage to the Paris Galt Moraine area, which would be designated as Protected Countryside.

Protected Countryside:

General policies including parkland, open space, and trails policies that apply across the Greenbelt also apply to the Protected Countryside.

The Protected Countryside is comprised of the 3 geographic specific policy areas:

- Agricultural System
- Natural System
- Settlement Area

- **Agricultural System** – The Greater Golden Horseshoe contains some of Canada’s best agricultural land. The Greenbelt Plan includes policies that support and protect an Agricultural System that is comprised of an agricultural land base (prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and other productive lands) and an agri-food network (infrastructure, services and assets that support the agri-food sector).

Policies support agriculture as the main land use by protecting against loss and fragmentation of agricultural land, and allow for a full range of agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses. The policies support an evolving agricultural and rural economy.

- **Natural System** – Through the Natural System the [Greenbelt Plan](#) provides policy protection for natural heritage and water resource systems, features, and areas, including habitat for endangered and threatened species. The Natural System is made up of a Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System. The policies build on the [Provincial Policy Statement](#). The proposed Paris Galt Moraine area would be designated as Protected Countryside with a Natural Heritage System overlay.
- **Settlement Areas** are subject to both [A Place to Grow](#) and [Greenbelt Plan](#) policies that impact their ability to grow. They have been placed into two categories: Towns/Villages and Hamlets.
 - **Towns/Villages:** A Place to Grow and Greenbelt Plan policies limit expansions by size (e.g., only modest expansions of no more than 5% increase in size to a maximum of 10 ha, no more than 50% of the expansion permitted as residential development, criteria for location of expansion, etc.) and by location (e.g. cannot expand into Natural Heritage System or specialty crop areas). Settlement areas outside the Greenbelt Plan cannot expand into the Greenbelt. Towns/Villages continue to be governed by municipal official plan policies and are not subject to Greenbelt Plan policies save for limited general policies (e.g. agri-food network, water resources, external connections, parkland, open space and trail policies). Municipal official plans are to be referred to for the precise location of Town/Village boundaries.
 - **Hamlets:** A Place to Grow and Greenbelt Plan policies do not permit expansions but allow limited growth through infill and intensification. Hamlets continue to be governed by municipal official plan policies and are not subject to Greenbelt Plan policies save for limited general policies (e.g. agri-food network, water resources, external connections, parkland, open space and

- trail policies). Municipal official plans are to be referred to for the precise location of hamlet boundaries. The proposed Paris Galt Moraine area would be designated as Protected Countryside with the Brisbane settlement area designated as a Hamlet.
- Smaller rural residential clusters and rural industrial development are not recognized as settlement areas in the Greenbelt Plan's settlement hierarchy. These clusters of existing development are recognized as existing uses that can continue or expand subject to Greenbelt policies. Establishment of new uses would be significantly limited by applicable Prime Agricultural Area or Rural Lands permitted use policies of the Greenbelt Plan.
 - **Other key general policies that apply to specific land use matters include:**
 - **Lot Creation** - Severances in prime agricultural areas are permitted only for agricultural uses (with minimum lot sizes of 16 ha/40 ac within specialty crop areas and 40 ha/100 ac within prime agricultural areas), agriculture-related uses, infrastructure, donation to public bodies for natural heritage conservation, minor lot adjustments and surplus farm residences, subject to various Greenbelt policies.
 - **Infrastructure** - Existing, new, or expanded infrastructure (e.g., roads, pipelines, transmission corridors) is permitted subject to locational considerations, including additional policies for sewer, water, and stormwater management facilities.
 - **Mineral Aggregates** - Additional requirements when locating mineral aggregate operations in the Natural Heritage System and in proximity to natural features, additional rehabilitation standards (e.g., maximum disturbed area policy), municipal official plans' aggregate policies cannot be more restrictive than the [Greenbelt Plan](#)
 - **Existing Uses** - All existing uses are permitted, previous approvals for single dwellings on lots of record are recognized, second dwelling units are permitted outside the Natural Heritage System, and additional policies regarding flexibility for expansions of existing buildings or structures.
 - **Non-agricultural uses** - Limited uses such as infrastructure and mineral aggregate operations are permitted in prime agricultural areas, subject to additional requirements.

Urban River Valleys

- Added to the [Greenbelt Plan](#) in 2013 and 2017
- URVs connect the Greenbelt to the Great Lakes, inland lakes and areas beyond through urban areas that are outside the Greenbelt.
- In addition to protecting natural and water features, URVs provide recreation, tourism and cultural opportunities in natural settings.
- The Greenbelt provides a firm boundary for the protection of lands, including any lands added as URV.
- While some privately owned lands may be included in URVs, URV policies apply only to publicly owned lands and rely on municipal official plan policies.
- URV lands are mostly designated in municipal official plans as parks, open space, recreation, conservation and/or environmental protection.