

Thickening around the Middle

THE GREENBELT ALLIANCE CALLS FOR A HUGE EXPANSION OF THE PROTECTED COUNTRYSIDE

MULMUR TOWNSHIP

Mulmur is just putting finishing touches on a brand new official plan. Planner Ron Mills says it "shows we're serious about protecting the environment, more serious than the province. Wind turbines, for example, could totally change the face of the township, but the Greenbelt Plan doesn't say no to those things." Mulmur's new official plan will include policies on rural character and scenic value, as well as enhanced ground and surface water protection.

SIMCOE COUNTY

While the Greenbelt Alliance calls for virtually all of south Simcoe to be included in the Greenbelt Plan, the region also faces an unprecedented number of development applications. Meanwhile, the province is concurrently developing "The Simcoe Plan," expected to bring extensive urbanization south of Barrie along the Highway 400 corridor. Places to Grow foresees Simcoe's population growing to 667,000 by 2031, a 70 per cent increase from 2001.

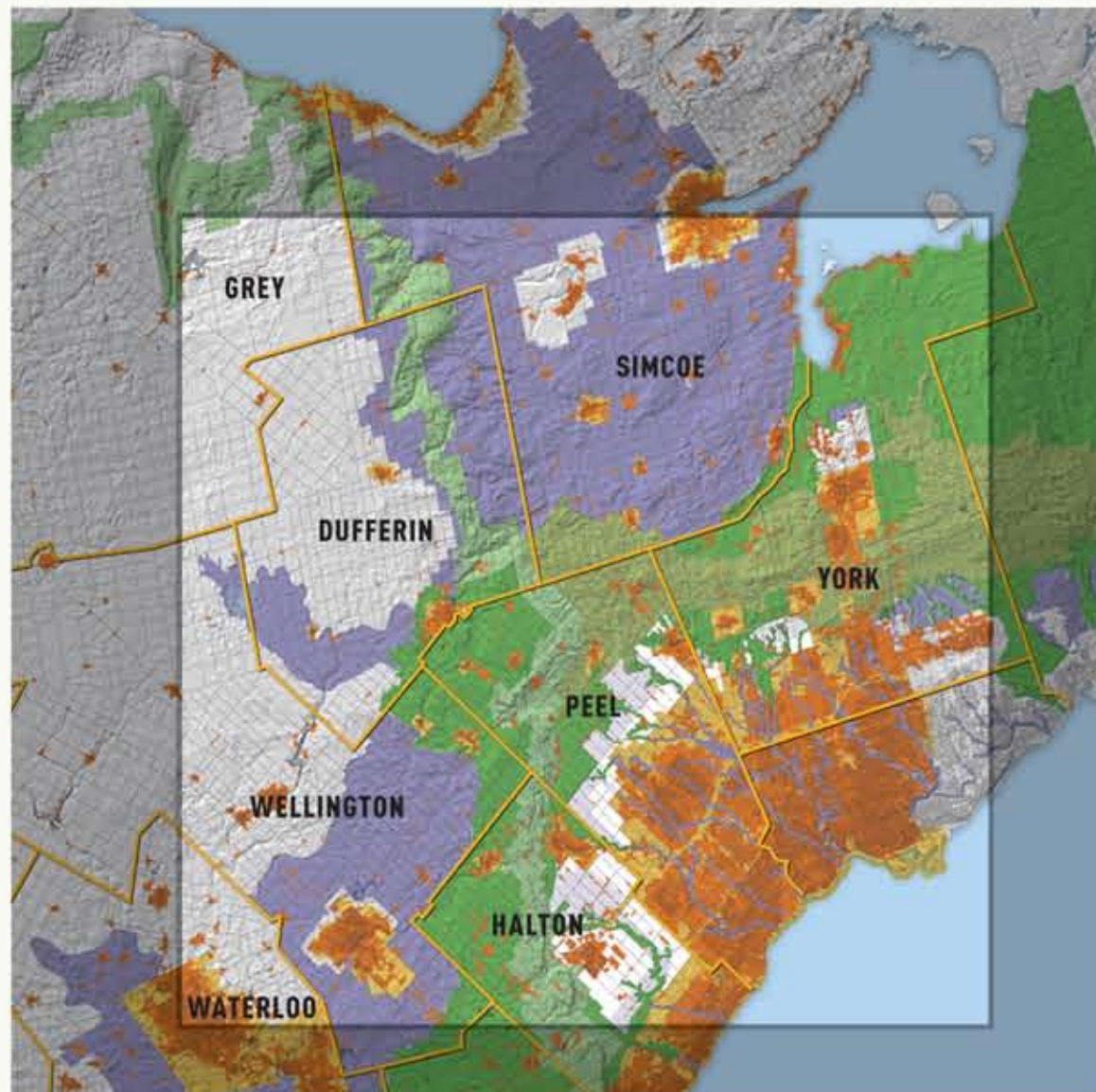
THE UNITED STATES

South of the border, the "Eat Local" movement is credited with something often thought impossible in today's agricultural economy: a comeback for small farms. After steadily declining for more than a century, the US Agriculture Department reports a 20 per cent increase in the number of small farms in the country, between 2002 and 2008, to 1.2 million.

The eat local trend is also appearing in major US chain supermarkets – even Walmart – which now feature local food sections, major corporations which now offer local food in their cafeterias, and 1,200 school districts that have connected with local farmers to provide fruits and vegetables for children.

Hundreds of farmers' markets have appeared across the US, reported as 4,692 in 2006 – a 50 per cent increase from 2001.

Closer to home, the number of Ontario farmers' markets has grown from a low of 60 in the 1980s, to 160 in 2008.



MARKHAM

East of Toronto, Markham city council is considering creation of a "food belt" on 2,000 hectares within city limits, effectively eliminating any further outward expansion and forcing growth to occur through intensification of the existing built-up area.

Countering the proposal, a recent full-page advertisement in a Markham newspaper warned of the dangers of runaway intensification. It was headlined, "Stop the Apartment Belt."

URBAN RIVER SYSTEMS

Greenbelt protection would be extended to include urban river systems whose source lies within the Greenbelt.

CALEDON'S WHITE BELT

The Greenbelt Alliance would cut the size of Caledon's "White Belt," a strip of land between the northerly urban boundary of Brampton and the current southerly limit of the Greenbelt, by about half.

WATERLOO REGION

Foodlink Waterloo Region works to connect local farms and food businesses, educate people about local food, and provide marketing and consulting services to farms and businesses engaged in the production of local food. Started in 2000, the non-profit agency is largely funded by a variety of government partners, and considered one of the pioneers of Ontario's local food movement.

Locally, Caledon Countryside Alliance has aggressively pursued an "Eat Local Caledon" campaign that includes linking farmers and buyers and organizing an annual "Eat Local" month among its many initiatives. See www.eatlocalcaledon.org.

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