



## Administration and Operations Committee Report

---

**To:** The Chair and Members of the Administration and Operations Committee  
**From:** Michelle Schaeffe, Policy Planning, County of Brant  
Michelle Diplock, Principal Planner, Nethery Planning  
**Date:** July 15, 2025  
**Report #:** RPT-0274-25  
**Subject:** Preliminary Key Directions for the Cainsville Employment Land Use Strategy  
**Purpose:** For Information and Direction

---

### Recommendation

---

That Report RPT-0274-25– Preliminary Key Directions for the Cainsville Employment Land Use Strategy be received as information;

And that Council endorses the Preliminary Key Directions of this report, which will be used to finalize the background research and inform the creation of three draft land use and design concepts for further consultation.

### Executive Summary

---

In November 2024, Council directed staff through [RPT-0501-24](#) to hire external consultants to complete a Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Comprehensive Land Use Strategy (“The Strategy”). The Strategy aims to position Cainsville not only as a development-ready employment area, but as a regional leader in innovation-driven, high-density employment. By targeting advanced sectors and enhancing the workplace experience, the Strategy will support a bold vision for economic growth that leverages Cainsville’s strategic location, infrastructure potential, and access to local talent.

Since that time, significant progress has been made. Watson and Associates Economists Ltd. have undertaken an Employment Hub Market Study specific to Cainsville, while Nethery Planning and The Planning Partnership led initial engagement activities and background research. These efforts have informed a set of preliminary key directions, which are outlined in this report and proposed to guide the next phase of concept development. A high-level illustration of the background findings is provided in Attachment 1 and detailed further in this report.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update Council on tasks completed to date;
- Present preliminary key directions for endorsement; and
- Set the stage for the development of three draft land use and design concepts.

The draft concepts will be developed and shared for public and stakeholder consultation throughout September 2025, including a Project Workshop scheduled for September 10<sup>th</sup> at the TF Warren Group Cainsville Community Centre. County Staff and the consulting team will continue to refine the Strategy based on feedback, with a preferred land use and design concept to be brought forward to Council for final approval.

## **Strategic Plan Priority**

---

Strategic Priority 1 - Sustainable and Managed Growth

## **Impacts and Mitigation**

---

### Social Impacts

The Strategy and associated supporting studies will provide valuable information on how the Cainsville Employment Lands can be developed utilizing a healthy and complete communities framework to help with employee attraction and retention.

### Environmental Impacts

The Strategy will incorporate environmental aspects such as protecting and improving the quality and quantity of water, conserving natural areas, identifying opportunities to integrate active transportation and green spaces to support a thriving business hub, and providing recommendations on sustainability.

### Economic Impacts

As part of [RPT-0501-24](#), Council approved a 2025 Capital Budget expenditure of about \$250,000. The key focus of this project is to determine a roadmap and planning framework, including a Comprehensive Land Use Strategy and implementing Zoning By-Law Amendment, which will result in the creation of a development-ready prestigious employment hub on full municipal services in the community of Cainsville. The strategy proposes a target of 7,600 jobs at buildout and prioritizing high-value employment sectors as sites develop or redevelop.

## **Report**

---

### Background

In November 2024, Council approved direction to staff through [RPT-0501-24](#) to hire external consultants to complete a Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Comprehensive Land Use Strategy, in which the goals are summarized as follows:

- Establish land use and zoning provisions to guide the development of a high-quality employment hub primarily consisting of industrial uses that are supported by complementary commercial businesses.
- Design a multimodal transportation network, including trails and potential transit services, to improve access and connectivity.
- Incorporate green infrastructure, including stormwater management and trail systems, to create a sustainable and attractive environment.
- Utilize high-quality urban design principles to create a visually cohesive, easy-to-navigate, and modern industrial and commercial area.
- Phase development in line with municipal servicing plans to ensure efficient service delivery and responsible infrastructure investments.

Since that time, the County retained a multi-disciplinary team of consultants including Watson and Associates Economists Limited to complete an Employment Hub Market Study specific to Cainsville; Nethery Planning and The Planning Partnership to conduct public engagement, complete the land use components and prepare an urban design strategy; and Arcadis to prepare a multimodal transportation plan and complete traffic studies and identify any road improvements needed to support the full buildout of Cainsville. Detailed design has been initiated for stormwater management, and water and wastewater servicing, as part of the next steps to implement the [Master Servicing Plan](#).

The following tasks have been completed in draft format, to be finalized shortly, but are summarized in the Analysis Section of this Report:

- Watson and Associates Economists Limited has carried out an Employment Hub Market Study specific to Cainsville.
- Initial engagement occurred including a dedicated [EngageBrant](#) website, notifying all owners in the Cainsville area by mail, offering one on one conversations with those interested in discussing the project, and notifying Indigenous Communities and government agencies.
- Nethery Planning has initiated background land use research which will form part of a Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Background Report.

The above-noted reports are in the process of being finalized and will be made available to Council, put on EngageBrant, and shared directly with Indigenous Communities, developers, consultants, agencies and other community partners.

Once the preliminary key directions are confirmed, the next steps in the planning process include:

- Developing three draft land use concepts for consultation.
- Meeting with interested community partners (e.g., Indigenous Communities, City of Brantford, utility companies, business owners).
- Hosting a Project Workshop on September 10<sup>th</sup> at the TF Warren Group Cainsville Community Centre. The Workshop will serve as a valuable tool to refine direction of the Strategy.
- Determining a preferred land use and design strategy.
- Completing a Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Strategy including Design Guidelines.
- Creating a Phasing of Development Strategy.
- Developing Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendments to implement the Strategy.

## Analysis

The County initiated the development of a Comprehensive Land Use Strategy to create a Premier Employment Hub in Cainsville. Located near Highway 403, Cainsville contains some of the County's largest employment lands, which consist of industrial uses and supportive commercial uses. The Strategy will guide future growth and investment on full municipal services to attract new business opportunities while supporting the area's long-term vitality and sustainability.

There has been increasing interest in employment investment in Cainsville and a recognition by the County that a coordinated, development-ready strategy is needed to unlock the full potential of the area.

In addition to the highlights included as Attachment 1 to this report, summarized below are the results of the ongoing studies and consultation completed to date.

### **“As We Heard it” Engagement Summary**

During the week of May 12, 2025, an EngageBrant webpage was published, and a Notice of Study Initiation was mailed to all landowners within the Cainsville area. Notice of the project initiation was provided by email to the Six Nations of the Grand River, the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation, local developers and consultants, as well as local agencies and community partners.

The Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations have requested to be engaged as the project progresses. A copy of the Employment Hub Market Study and Background Report will be shared with both communities.

Initial feedback from landowners in early May identified municipal servicing as the most critical component for future development. It was noted that end land uses depend on securing prospective tenants. Industrial landowners expressed a desire for the County to proactively support rapid accommodation of new industrial users. They also identified that warehousing and logistics operations are of the highest demand for employment lands in Cainsville. Though these are the highest demand uses they are misaligned with the County’s goal of achieving higher job density per hectare.

On June 16, 2025, one-on-one conversations were held with interested Cainsville community members to identify local concerns and aspirations for the future. Key feedback from those discussions identified broad support for the expansion of employment uses in Cainsville, though with concern about traffic safety being raised by participants.

As the project launched, this initial foundation of community feedback will support the development of three land use concepts that will be shared and refined during the September 10, 2025, workshops.

### **Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Market Study**

Watson and Associates Economists Limited was retained to complete an Employment Hub Market Study to assess the potential for Cainsville to be developed as a strategic employment hub within the County. The study identifies a range of opportunities and challenges and makes several high-level recommendations to inform future planning and investment decisions.

Key findings from the study are summarized below:

#### **1. Strategic Location & Assets:**

- Proximity to Highway 403 makes Cainsville ideal industrial employment uses.
- New Community Centre serves as a central hub for residents and workers.
- Colborne Street has potential as a key corridor for traffic flow and employment-supportive uses.
- Cainsville Trail offers scenic, active transportation links to Brantford.
- Rural setting provides natural buffers from sensitive uses, supporting a village-like industrial hub.

- Planned transit expansion, including a stop at the Community Centre, will improve connectivity to Downtown Brantford.
- Proximity to high-performing employment hubs in neighbouring communities provides benchmarking opportunities (e.g. Ancaster Business Park, North Cambridge Business Park, Eastgate Business Park in Brantford etc.)
- Potential CN Rail freight service could enhance logistics and reduce business costs.

## 2. Current Employment Profile:

- Approximately 2,700 jobs with an average density of 15 jobs/net hectare.
  - Multi-tenant buildings: 42 jobs/net hectare.
  - Single-user buildings: 11 jobs/net hectare (due to space for parking/storage).
- Manufacturing accounts for 41% of the employment base.

## 3. Land Supply & Growth Potential:

- Cainsville offers large, undeveloped tracts of land, rare in the region, suitable for large-scale industrial or campus-style developments.
- With full servicing, potential target of 30 jobs/net hectare, similar to Brantford.
- By 2051, employment could grow by 64% to 7,600 jobs (4,900 additional jobs)

## 4. Development Constraints:

- Servicing limitations, including water and wastewater capacity, which are being addressed through the Master Servicing Plan.
- Fragmented land ownership, complicating large-scale development.
- Limited supply of shovel-ready, serviced land despite strong demand.

Further to these findings, the preliminary recommendations of the study are identified below:

- Invest in infrastructure, especially water and wastewater upgrades.
- Pursue inter-municipal servicing agreements to resolve bottlenecks.
- Complete secondary planning, including pre-zoning, to streamline approvals.
- Protect employment lands from encroachment by sensitive uses.
- Promote the area through targeted marketing and investment attraction strategies.

The development of the land use strategy for Cainsville will provide direction on how best to implement the recommendations of the Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Market Study.

## **Background Review Summary**

Research has been initiated to complete a background review of the study area and existing context, as well as all applicable policies and work that has been done to date to support the evolution of Cainsville including:

- Provincial Planning Statement.
- A Simply Grand Plan: The Official Plan for the County of Brant.

- Comprehensive Zoning By-Law – The County of Brant (August 2021 Office Consolidation).
- Advancing Brant's Economic Future: 2024-2027 County of Brant Economic Development Strategy.
- County of Brant Transportation Master Plan.
- City of Brantford / County of Brant Joint Strategic Transportation Study.
- County of Brant Trail Master Plan.
- Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Market Study.
- Cainsville Master Servicing Plan.

A full background report is being completed in advance of community engagement and will be posted to the EngageBrant page. The report will guide the development of three land use concepts for Cainsville in tandem with a Multimodal Transportation Plan and Servicing Strategy for the area. As part of this report, a series of emerging directions for the project have been identified and are outlined below.

### Preliminary Key Directions and Recommendations

Building on the work completed to date, the project team recommends endorsing the following preliminary key directions, which will be used to inform the creation of three draft land use and design concepts for further consultation. It should be noted that County Staff and the Consulting Team will continue to refine the key directions throughout the project, ultimately selecting a preferred land use and design concept that will be brought forward to Council for approval.

### **Preliminary Key Directions**

- 1. Growth Potential and Target Sectors:**
  - a. Increase the employment density from 15 to at least 30 jobs per hectare by targeting higher-order employment uses.
  - b. Target high-value sectors such as advanced manufacturing, clean technology, research and development, and other sectors that align with regional economic trends to ensure high job density.
  - c. Limit logistics and warehousing to secondary uses limited in area and direct large-scale operation to areas with direct access to Highway 403 (e.g. Rest Acres Road and Middle Townline Road employment areas).
- 2. Employment First Development:**
  - a. Prioritize protection of encroaching uses and development of employment lands to attract industrial businesses.
  - b. Re-designate General Employment lands, apply a site-specific policy area, or amend general policies to highlight the strategic importance of these lands and set a higher standard of defined supported uses.
  - c. Identify appropriate land for non-industrial and non-residential uses that support the Employment Area (e.g., restaurants, hotels, day cares, fitness centres).
- 3. Design and Identity:**
  - a. Establish and implement clear urban design guidance and built-form zoning provisions to ensure high-quality development in Cainsville that will help position it as a focal point for high-standard employment uses in Brant.

- b. Design the area for operational efficiency, visual coherence, and quality of place that reflects contemporary industrial design principles.
  - c. Apply a climate change lens to incorporate green spaces and connections.
  - d. Incorporate Indigenous place-keeping and planning perspectives in recognition of the historical significance of the nearby Grand River and its tributaries.
- 4. **Opportunities by Location:**
  - a. Central Cainsville: Develop small-scale and multi-tenant industrial sites (2 ha or smaller) to support high density employment and small business growth, fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment.
  - b. Large Vacant Sites: Utilize large tracts of vacant land to plan for campus-style or large industrial developments to attract expansive industrial projects.
  - c. Old Onondaga Road East to Shaver Street: Position underutilized lands for large-scale industrial redevelopment.
  - d. Northeastern Gateway Node: Create a strategic entry point for employment-supportive services, protecting the remaining lands for primary industrial uses.
- 5. **Infrastructure Opportunities:**
  - a. Determine phasing and funding for major capital projects to increase capacity and develop the area on full municipal services.
  - b. Investigate the reintroduction of rail service to enhance freight transportation capabilities and reduce logistic costs for targeted industries.
  - c. Continuing work with the City of Brantford as they consider the extension of Brantford Transit services to Cainsville to improve cross-municipal mobility options.
  - d. Integrate the Cainsville Trail and other natural areas into development plans to incorporate an active transportation plan network.
  - e. Enhance the workplace experience, particularly along Colborne Street, by integrating new sidewalks, upgraded lighting, enhanced utilities, streetscaping, and employee-focused amenities to create a vibrant and supportive streetscape, to encourage private investment and competitiveness.
- 6. **Branding:**
  - a. To fully realize the potential as a prestigious employment area, the County should explore strategies that enhance Cainsville's brand and sense of place. This includes developing a distinct identity for the business park that emphasizes innovation, sustainability, and quality of life.

Establishing and implementing the preliminary key directions aims to transform Cainsville into a leading employment area by aligning land use planning with economic development objectives, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering sustainable growth.

Staff recommend that Council endorse the preliminary key directions of this report, which will set directions for targeting specific employment sectors, utilizing key areas along Colborne Street for supportive commercial uses, requiring a high standard of urban design, prioritizing infrastructure planning, and branding Cainsville as a prestige employment hub.

### Next Steps

The next steps of this project will focus on using the preliminary key directions and results of the background studies to establish three draft land use and design concepts. The draft concepts will be used for consultation purposes throughout the month of September, including the hosting of a Project Workshop on September 10<sup>th</sup> at the TF Warren Group

Cainsville Community Centre. County Staff and the Consulting Team will continue to refine the key directions throughout the project, ultimately selecting a preferred land use and design concept that will be brought forward to Council for approval.

**Attachments**

---

- 1. Cainsville Premier Employment Hub Highlights

**Reviewed By**

---

Alison Newton, CAO  
Alysha Dyjach, General Manager of Development Services  
Brandon Kortleve, Manager of Policy Planning  
Zach Gable, Director of Economic Development and Tourism  
Mark Maxwell, Director of Engineering and Infrastructure Planning  
Jeremy Vink, Director of Planning

**Copied To**

---

Kathy Ballantyne, Director of Facilities and Special Project  
Melissa Connor, General Manager of Strategic Initiatives  
Don Cunningham, Director of Development Engineering  
Chris Garwood, Senior Economic Development Officer  
David Mellor, General Manager of Operations  
Philip Mete, General Manager of Community Services

**By-law and/or Agreement**

---

By-law Required	No
Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk	No