

Staff Report 2024-0182

Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

Subject: Caledon Green Development Standards

Submitted By: Alexandra Service, Climate Change Specialist, Energy and Environment Division

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt the Caledon Green Development Standards, attached as Schedule A to this staff report, and that they come into effect starting July 1, 2024; and

That staff be delegated the authority to make minor adjustments to the Standards and/or proposed implementation process, subject to approval of the Commissioner of Engineering, Public Works and Transportation after a one-year pilot phase.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Green Development Standards (GDS) are implemented through the planning approvals process to ensure sustainable design features in new development. They are identified as a key action in the Resilient Caledon Climate Change Plan, the Town's Strategic Plan, and the new Official Plan.**
- **Caledon's GDS includes 20 metrics across three theme areas: Community Design and Mobility; Green Infrastructure; and Buildings and Energy**
- **The GDS will apply to all new residential, commercial and industrial developments across Caledon whereas municipal facilities will continue to adhere to the Town's Corporate Green Building Standard (2022).**
- **Caledon's GDS involves a streamlined, single set of mandatory standards, with flexibility in how targets can be achieved. It will be rolled out within a one-year pilot phase to assess implementation and make adjustments if needed.**

DISCUSSION

Importance of Green Standards

Green Development Standards (GDS) are an important tool to ensure policies related to sustainability and climate change are implemented in new development. They were identified as a key action in the Resilient Caledon Community Climate Change Action Plan, adopted in 2021 following Council's declaration of a climate change emergency. The Plan established a community-wide target of reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and enhancing climate change preparedness across the community.

The Resilient Caledon Plan showed that if direct action is not taken, GHG emissions in Caledon will more than double by 2050 given the significant growth expected. While growth can present environmental challenges, housing is also an urgent need and well-

planned communities can bring significant social and economic benefits. Being at the beginning of our growth phase gives the Town a unique opportunity to promote sustainable development that minimizes environmental impacts while creating complete, livable and resilient communities for residents.

Benefits of Green Development Standards include:

- Reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and transportation
- Increased preparedness of buildings and neighbourhoods to climate impacts
- Improved health and well-being of residents
- Better quantity and quality of green space in urban areas
- Cost savings for residents and businesses (i.e. lower energy and utility costs)

Under the *Planning Act*, municipalities have authority to approve plans and drawings for development through site plan control, including matters related to sustainable design. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing clarified this authority in the context of Bill 23, stating that proposed changes to site plan provisions were not intended to prevent municipalities from implementing green standards. In addition, the *Municipal Act, 2001*, *Planning Act*, and Provincial Policy Statement all provide direction that municipalities shall have regard for energy conservation, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and improved resiliency to climate change impacts, directives that have been incorporated into the Town's updated Official Plan. Green Development Standards are a critical tool to implementing these policies at a site scale.

The Ontario Building Code regulates the construction of buildings in Ontario including setting minimum standards for energy efficiency. It had been expected that the Province would strengthen those energy efficiency requirements from 2012 levels to harmonize with the national building code, however the recently released OBC update remains status quo on energy efficiency. This is another reason why municipal green standards are so critical, to ensure that planning applications incorporate strategies to help reduce energy needs for residents and businesses over the long term.

Caledon's GDS Structure and Metrics

Staff evaluated different approaches used by other municipal green standards including a points-based structure (used by Brampton and Vaughan) or tiered structure (used by Toronto and Whitby). Based on feedback from staff and members of industry, Caledon's draft GDS contains a single set of mandatory metrics to maximize clarity and simplicity for both applicants and reviewers. Each metric sets a mandatory performance requirement or target, however there is flexibility in how that target can be achieved, recognizing different development types and site contexts.

The GDS will apply to all new development in Caledon including residential (10 units or more, aligned with new Provincial requirements), commercial, industrial and institutional. Staff will continue to explore other mechanisms to ensure sustainable design features in smaller developments where feasible.

Caledon’s GDS includes 20 metrics organized into 3 theme areas as shown in Table 2 below (detailed metrics are included in Schedule A to this staff report).

Table 2: GDS Theme Areas and Metrics

Theme	Community Design and Mobility	Green Infrastructure	Buildings and Energy
Objective	Enable active and sustainable modes of transportation and enhance well-being of residents	Improve stormwater management, reduce urban heat island, and enhance habitat through urban green space	Support low carbon, energy efficient and resilient buildings and renewable energy systems
Metrics	Housing Diversity	On-Site Green Infrastructure	Operational Energy and GHG Emissions
	Connections to Parks and Open Space	Healthy Soils	Building Resiliency
	Light Pollution Reduction	Plant Species	Solar Readiness
	Active Transportation	Urban Heat Island	Embodied Carbon
	Public Spaces	Stormwater Quantity and Quality	Water Conservation
	Mixed Use Neighbourhoods	Bird-Friendly Design	Construction Waste
	Electric Vehicle Charging		Owner Education

GDS checklists will also include an optional field for applicants to indicate any features or innovative practices that go above and beyond the minimum GDS requirements.

Implementation Process

Green Development Standards are implemented through the planning approvals process and will be required as part of a complete development application. Applicants will submit a GDS checklist along with supporting documentation demonstrating how each metric has been achieved. To streamline requirements for different applicant types, Caledon’s GDS includes three separate checklists designed for draft plan of subdivision, site plan, and industrial applications. Important to note is that the GDS is separate from, and will not impact, the building permit process.

Table 3 outlines the anticipated application and review process.

Table 3: GDS Process

Application Step	GDS Submission and Review
Preliminary (PARC) Meeting and Checklist	Applicants advised of GDS requirements through PARC checklist. Questions about applicability and compliance fielded by Town staff as needed.
Pre-Consultation (DART) Review	Applicant submits GDS checklist and supporting documentation as part of a complete application submission.
Circulation/Technical Review	Town staff review submitted plans, drawings and reports to verify compliance with the GDS. Comments are provided to the applicant and any outstanding documents or unmet metric thresholds are identified.
Re-Submission	Applicant makes any needed updates and re-submits to the Town
Decision Made on Application	GDS submission deemed complete and relevant requirements included into conditions and agreements
Detailed Design/Site Construction	Applicant demonstrates that GDS requirements are met in detailed design submissions and through site construction

The lead planner assigned to an application will coordinate the overall process, while the Energy and Environment Division will facilitate technical review with relevant divisions and support the overall program as it rolls out. Staff will track their time spent reviewing GDS submissions through the pilot phase to support future resourcing.

To ensure the industry is prepared for GDS implementation, staff have taken the following actions:

- Included a description of the GDS in the Town’s pre-consultation checklist since March 2023 to notify applicants that the program was in development.
- Requirement for applicants to submit a ‘GDS Brief’ since July 2023 that describes the sustainability features to be included in their application.
- Regular engagement with industry members and associations to update on process and timelines.

GDS Rollout

The GDS will be implemented within a one-year pilot phase starting July 1, 2024 to continue gathering feedback on the metrics and implementation process, and make minor adjustments if necessary. During this phase, applicants will be required to submit the full GDS checklist and supporting documentation, however there may be flexibility on meeting specific targets if appropriate justification is provided. The pilot phase will be supported by an internal working group comprised of the main reviewers and other relevant staff. Staff will make recommendations on any changes after this period, to be approved by the Commissioner of Engineering, Public Works and Transportation and applied to the

program as a whole. Once the pilot phase concludes, the GDS will be in full force and effect as of July 1, 2025.

Following Council approval, implementation will be supported by these additional steps:

- GDS Guidebook – includes all metrics and detailed specifications, submission instructions, resources and templates;
- Operational Plan – provide detailed information on implementation and the Town’s internal review process, staff roles and responsibilities, and resourcing needs;
- Monitoring and Verification Strategy – identify key performance indicators and a method to track the outcomes of the GDS program over time; and
- Training – for applicants and staff on the GDS submission and review process.

Moving forward, the GDS will be formally reviewed and updated every 3 years to accommodate changes in policy and technology, and to strengthen requirements where needed. In particular, staff will explore opportunities to improve on building energy and GHG emissions metrics to support the Town’s goal of new development achieving net zero (or near net zero) emissions standards by 2030. Formal reviews will involve consultation with industry and other stakeholders to help inform any changes to the metrics. Updated versions of the GDS will be released in 2027 and 2030.

How the Standards Were Developed

The GDS project, co-led by the Energy and Environment and Policy Planning divisions, involved the following key components:

- **Municipal Benchmarking** – aligned Caledon’s GDS with, and built upon, best practices from other municipalities in the GTA and elsewhere. Staff looked at green standards in place in Brampton, Toronto, King Township, Pickering, Ajax and Whitby among others.
- **Context Analysis** – assessed the Town’s existing requirements related to green standards to avoid duplication and fill gaps where needed, as well as the Provincial land use planning context that grants municipal authority to implement green standards.
- **Public and Stakeholder Engagement** – engagement was carried out at multiple points of the project, both to inform the initial draft and to gather feedback throughout the process, including with:
 - Project Advisory Committee (PAC) comprised of staff from each department
 - Conservation Authorities
 - Renewable energy and sustainable technology providers
 - Utilities
 - Land developers and builders in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors, as well as industry associations

- Residents and local community groups
- First Nations

Some of the major themes staff heard from industry were to keep the process clear and ensure it is not too onerous for applicants or reviewers; provide flexibility in how the metrics can be achieved; and ensure the metrics are realistic and achievable within the current context. Feedback from other stakeholders and residents included the importance of mandatory rather than voluntary metrics to ensure uptake; the need to create space for nature and wildlife in new communities; and to address social and economic goals alongside environmental ones. Further details can be found in Schedule B: Engagement Summary Report.

The majority of the feedback received, both general comments and feedback on specific metrics, has been incorporated into the current draft.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications are anticipated in 2024. Additional staff resources will be requested through the 2025 budget process to support implementation.

COUNCIL WORK PLAN

Strategic Plan 2023-2035

This report is directly related to the following priority in Caledon's 2023-2035 Strategic Plan:

Environmental Leadership

- Action: Establish and bring into effect Green Development Standards

Community Vitality and Livability

Details about Caledon's 2023-2035 Strategic Plan can be found at caledon.ca/strategicplan.

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A: Caledon Green Development Standards Metrics

Schedule B: Engagement Summary Report