



PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 26th, 2025

AGENDA

Review and Discussion

Quarry Consultation Summary

Policy Discussion

Next Steps

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION



REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Review and approval of previous meeting minutes.



Any questions of Committee Members.



PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #1

Project introduction with Committee including summaries of changes to be considered under four topic areas of Agriculture, Housing, Economy and Growth and Development

Provincial changes including Additional Residential Units (ARUs) and Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

Affordable housing

Agriculture, Agriculture-related and On-farm Diversified Uses

Bridging 'Solutions-Oriented' Planning approaches into the County Official Plan

PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #2

Housing Consultant attended the meeting to review land use recommendations of the Attainable Housing Review with the Committee

Reallocating servicing capacity / Use it, or Lose it

Density and intensification

Affordable Housing targets

Additional Residential Units (ARUs)

***“THAT** County Council consider including language in the OP to prohibit the severance of ARUs in rural areas and to address size, reverse ARUs and clustering.”*

PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #3

Director of Economic Development attended

CBRE Tourism Toolkit and Land Use Recommendations

Employment Areas and Regional Opportunities

Renewable Energy

Agronomist Consultant presented to the Committee on Agricultural Parcel Sizes

PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #4

Watson and Associates Land Economists presented Population, Employment and Housing forecasts that were prepared based on the Ministry of Finance projections

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions and matters that should be considered by Municipalities when assessing applications

Agricultural Systems Approach

Agricultural Surplus Dwellings

Inadvertent Lot Mergers

Policies to support farm-related business



Middlesex County Official Plan

Engagement Summary Report

June 2025

www.quarryconsulting.ca



Outline

1. Executive Summary

2. Methodology

3. Key Themes and Insights

4. Appendix:

- *Focus Group Results Summary*
- *Community Survey Results Summary*



Executive Summary

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The County is in the process of updating the Official Plan to bring it into conformity with the policies of the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) aimed at guiding land use planning and development across the province.

An important step in this multi-phase Official Plan Review process is the consultation with key sectors and community members who live and work in the County.

APPROACH

Multiple approaches were used to gather input including open public house session, focus groups and a community survey.



3

Public Open Houses – May, Oct, Nov



33

Focus Group Participants



95

Community Survey Respondents

Thematic key takeaways and insights have been summarized in this report to inform the refresh of the Official Plan.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Expand affordable, diverse housing by easing barriers and using supportive policies

2

Preserve farmland through focused growth and sustainable practices

3

Enable streamlined processes and flexible planning for economic development

4

Align expansion with infrastructure, protect land, and modernize land use policy frameworks



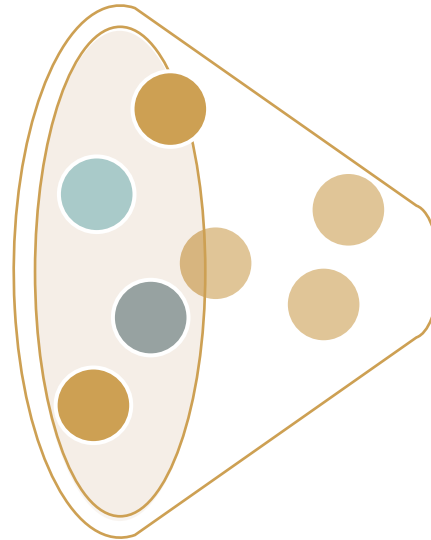
Methodology

Multiple approaches were used to gather data from a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The output from the engagements were analysed and synthesised into key themes, insights and strategic questions for Middlesex County to consider.

FROM OBSERVATION...



DATA COLLECTION



ANALYSIS and SYNTHESIS OF KEY THEMES









...TO INSIGHTS

Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

Key Themes and Insights: Summary

The results of the stakeholder engagement phase of this project have been aggregated into a set of key themes and insights, which provide County Council and Senior leaders a launching pad for the next strategic plan.

Key Theme	Insights
 Focus on Economic Development and Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Diversify the tax base to enable economic growthSupport growth with appropriate funding and scaling of support servicesMake the key strategic choice regarding the future fiscal posture of the County
 Foster Collaborative Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Seek new models of collaboration between Council and local municipalities, London and the ProvinceCapitalize on efficiency opportunities between the County and local municipalitiesFoster productive relationships with local First Nations communities to advance common interests
 Increase Education and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clarify and communicate the role of the County vs. local municipalities with ALL key stakeholders, including Council members and constituentsImprove and formalize Council on-boarding programs
 Build Internal Capability and Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prioritize modernization of technology and process, with a focus on finance as an early priorityBolster the capacity of in-demand support services and design a fit-for-purpose model for each service/program area

KEY FINDINGS



Key Themes and Insights

Key Themes and Insights: Summary

The results of the engagement phase of this project have been aggregated into a set of key themes and insights, to ensure the refreshed Official Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the people who live, work, and invest in Middlesex community.

Key Themes



Affordable housing on serviceable land



Protect Farmland and Support Agricultural Viability



Smart Growth Planning



Sustainable Land Stewardship

Insights

- Prioritize affordable, smaller homes and senior housing to meet changing demographics and preferences.
- Address barriers like zoning restrictions and limited infrastructure capacity.
- Use land use policies to support diverse housing options, redevelopment, and gentle density.

- Protect farmland by directing growth inward and supporting on-farm housing and diversification.
- Address farm succession challenges and improve rural infrastructure and services.
- Restrict non-farm development on prime agricultural land and promote sustainable practices.

- Focus on agriculture-related sectors, tech manufacturing, and robotics with clear, strategic priorities.
- Streamline regulations, incentivize job-creating projects, and strengthen regional partnerships.
- Support entrepreneurship, mixed-use development, and flexible land use policies.

- Expand settlement boundaries with adequate infrastructure, affordability, and alignment with County's vision.
- Protect agricultural/natural lands, ensure public consultation, and promote complete, accessible communities.
- Address barriers to support innovation, redevelopment, and economic vitality.



Theme #1: Affordable Housing and Serviceable Land

WHAT WE HEARD

- Partners and community consistently emphasize a growing **housing affordability crisis**, making traditional single-family homes increasingly out of reach for younger households. This demographic shift is coupled with changing lifestyle preferences, with many younger residents favoring **smaller, more manageable housing options** such as townhomes, semi-detached units, or apartments that align with their financial capabilities, evolving buying preferences and service needs.
- An aging population adds complexity, creating significant demand for **senior-appropriate housing**, including options that enable aging in place and foster community continuity. Current housing stock is insufficient to meet these needs, and many seniors may be forced to relocate outside the County without adequate local options.
- Barriers such as **restrictive zoning and complex, time-consuming planning approvals** hinder the ability of developers to deliver affordable and diverse housing types quickly and cost-effectively. Additionally, infrastructure capacity limits the feasibility of denser or new housing developments. The preservation of agricultural lands further restricts the availability of developable land, intensifying competition and pressure on housing supply.
- Stakeholders also highlight a disconnect between government policies and the **dynamic nature of housing demand**, with insufficient mechanisms to track and respond to changing citizen preferences. This gap underscores the need for ongoing monitoring and adaptive planning.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to highlight the need to:

- **Revise policies to increase affordable housing options** that cater to younger generations' preferences for smaller, cost-effective homes, as well as senior housing to support an aging population.
- **Address barriers** such as zoning restrictions, infrastructure limitations, and approval processes by enabling higher-density development, additional residential units, and inclusive, universally designed homes.
- **Balance housing expansion with farmland protection** by encouraging development within existing neighborhoods and leveraging more brownfield through build-up and not out, while minimizing farmland conversion.



Theme #2: Protect Farmland and Support Agricultural Viability

WHAT WE HEARD

- Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Middlesex County's identity and economy, but it faces significant threats from expanding urbanization. Stakeholders articulate a clear preference for **directing growth inward**, maximizing density in communities rather than expanding settlement boundaries into prime farmland.
- The viability of farms depends on more than just land protection; **on-farm housing for seasonal and foreign workers** is critical to operational continuity, as is enabling **diversified agricultural uses** that allow farms to innovate and increase income streams beyond traditional farming.
- A particularly acute challenge is **farm succession**. Without proper planning and support, farms are often sold off or there is pressure to subdivide, resulting in the loss of agricultural land and heritage. This issue intersects with generational and economic factors, requiring supportive policies and community education.
- Stakeholders note infrastructure deficits in rural areas, such as limited transit and inadequate social support programs, which affect both farming operations and rural residents' quality of life. There are also tensions between farming and non-farming land uses, highlighting the need for careful land use planning and conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Environmental sustainability and climate resilience are growing concerns, pressing the need for green building practices and resource conservation integrated into agricultural and rural planning.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to highlight that:

- **Growth should be directed inward**, focusing on increasing density in communities to prevent urban sprawl onto valuable farmland.
- **Policies should support farm viability** through on-farm housing for seasonal workers, diversified farm uses, and improved farm succession planning to reduce farmland loss.
- **Cross-municipal coordination should be strengthened** to create clear frameworks for settlement boundary expansion to protect agricultural lands while accommodating rural housing needs.



Theme #3: Smart Growth Planning

WHAT WE HEARD

- The County's economic future is closely linked to its strengths in **agriculture and agri-business**, but stakeholders recognize the importance of diversifying into **high- and mid-tech manufacturing**, farm-to-table enterprises, construction and housing product manufacturing, food processing innovations, and emerging sectors like robotics.
- Middlesex County benefits from strategic transportation links and proximity to major markets, which are seen as key assets to leverage for attracting investment. However, economic development efforts suffer from fragmented coordination across government agencies, regulatory processes, and limited incentives for businesses to invest locally.
- There is a clear call for a more **focused, strategic approach** in the Official Plan that avoids trying to support every sector equally, instead prioritizing those with the highest growth potential and strongest regional fit. Stakeholders stress the importance of having an economic development champion to break down bureaucratic silos and better integrate initiatives.
- Flexibility in zoning and land use policies is needed to support **entrepreneurship, adaptive reuse**, and mixed-use developments that can nurture small businesses and startups. This is especially important for settlement areas where revitalization and innovation can create vibrant local economies.
- The County's relationship with regional partners like the London EDC is viewed as critical for attracting **foreign direct investment** and supporting more proactive business recruitment campaigns.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to:

- **Prioritize attracting and retaining jobs** in agriculture, advanced manufacturing, agri-business, and emerging sectors like robotics and food processing.
- **Streamline regulatory processes**, reduce development fees, and foster partnerships with regional economic organizations to boost investment and competitiveness.
- **Encourage diversified commercial and industrial land uses**, entrepreneurship in settlement areas, and tailored precinct planning to stimulate local economic innovation and growth.



Theme #4: Strategic Settlement Expansion

WHAT WE HEARD

- Expansion of settlement areas must be managed carefully to **balance growth pressures with fiscal, environmental, and social sustainability**. Interested parties emphasized that new growth should align closely with existing or planned infrastructure capacity, especially low-cost servicing options, to avoid unsustainable future maintenance burdens on municipalities.
- Recent provincial policy shifts have changed the development approval landscape, giving landowners more direct influence over boundary expansions. This **increases the complexity and urgency for local governments to have robust, transparent, and expedited processes** to manage requests effectively while safeguarding community values.
- **Community input is critical** but often underutilized or rushed in these processes, risking developments that do not reflect local needs or preferences. Community members advocate for strong public engagement mechanisms and for new developments to contribute meaningfully to **complete communities** — places with accessible green space, affordable housing, transit options, and services.
- Affordability, accessibility, infrastructure service capacity, community needs, climate resilience, and employment land availability emerge as key principles to embed in any expansion strategy, ensuring long-term community health and prosperity.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to:

- **Ensure settlement area expansions are carefully evaluated** based on infrastructure capacity, economic servicing efficiency, and alignment with long-term municipal sustainability and vision.
- **Protect farmland and natural environments** by directing growth to designated settlement areas and prioritizing complete, accessible, and climate-resilient communities.
- **Engage communities meaningfully in planning decisions**, incorporate affordable housing targets in new developments, and balance operational costs of infrastructure and services.



Community Survey: Key Insights

The Community Survey revealed relevant insights aligned to the themes from focus groups and open public house.



Affordable Housing and Serviceable Land

- Middlesex must expand diverse and affordable housing options to meet shifting demographics, especially for youth and seniors.
- Land use tools, affordability targets, and surplus land conversion are essential to unlock supply.
- Tracking housing metrics is critical for responsive planning.



Protect Farmland and Support Agricultural Viability

- Farmland is at risk; protecting it requires smart growth policies focused on density and infill in existing communities.
- Succession planning, farm viability, and rural infrastructure must be prioritized to sustain the agricultural economy.



Smart Growth Planning

- Legacy zoning and approval processes limit growth; regulatory reform and flexibility are key.
- Supporting brownfield redevelopment, mixed-use areas, and protecting employment lands will drive innovation and attract investment.
- Housing supply and economic development must be planned together to support a strong workforce.



Sustainable Land Stewardship

- Settlement expansion must be aligned with infrastructure capacity, cost-efficiency, and farmland protection.
- Community input, affordability, and complete communities must guide all development decisions.



Appendix



Focus Groups

Specific lines of inquiry were tailored to participants based on gather insights across the areas of economic development, agriculture, housing and growth and development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	CAOs	AGRICULTURE	LOCAL COUNCILS	PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11 Participants• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and Development• Water Supply• Construction• Real Estate• School Boards• Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 Participants• Representatives across 6 municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 Participants• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local farmers• Greenhouse owners• Ontario Farming community• Agriculture advocacy agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 Participants• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North Middlesex• Strathroy-Caradoc• Middlesex Centre• Lucan Biddulph• Middlesex Centre• Newbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 Participants• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and Development• Agriculture Federation• Service providers• Real Estate• Business owners/investors





Focus Group – Discussion Guide

Specific lines of inquiry were tailored to participants based on gather insights across the economic development, agriculture, housing and growth and development sectors.

Lines of Inquiry	Discussion
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What types of housing do you think our community needs more of to support residents of all ages and income levels?• What are the barriers/key factors that need to be considered?
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we best protect farmland while also supporting a thriving and modern agricultural sector?
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What kinds of jobs or businesses would you like to see grow or be attracted to our community?• How can the Official Plan better support economic development and innovation?
Growth & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What key factors should be taken into account when evaluating a request to expand a settlement area boundary?





Focus Group: Results Summary

Economic development

Housing factors and challenges

1. Affordability
2. Servicing capability relative to growth
3. Good local jobs
4. Protection of Agriculture land
5. Aligning demand vs. supply

Protect farmland by:

1. Increasing density in communities
2. On-farm housing
3. Continue to locate new schools within existing settlement areas
4. Zoned industrial land – high costs to service it

Types of jobs/businesses to attract

1. Ag and Ag-related businesses
2. High tech mid manufacturing
3. Construction and housing related products, prefab

Factors to support economic development

1. Clear direction & policy on partnership development
2. Focus, don't try to be everything, leverage strengths
3. Economic champion contact
4. Incentivize by reducing costs

Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary:

1. Where is community services and infrastructure located?
2. Schools and other community services
3. Accelerate the process

CAOs

Gaps in current housing supply

1. Attainable and affordable
2. Additional residential units
3. Barriers: infrastructure limits, legacy zoning
4. Higher density compatible with existing housing

Land use policy tools for agriculture...

1. On-farm diversified uses
2. Settlement boundary expansion application process
3. Address conflict between ag protection vs. building new housing
4. Ag impact studies & assessments

Ways to support emerging sectors ...

1. Create business park nodes along major intersections
2. On farm diversified use policies
3. Expand definitions of commercial /industrial uses

Criteria in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. Does it affect the urban boundary?
2. Infrastructure (can it be serviced?)
3. Impact on ag lands?
4. Transportation networks and proximity to community services

Agriculture

Housing factors and challenges

1. Servicing capability relative to infrastructure
2. Minimize using farmland for new housing
3. Lack of transit and social support programs

Issues facing agriculture and rural

1. Create policies to attract support business who supply ag industry Infrastructure provided by municipality to allow ag to thrive
2. Aging farm population
3. Farm development and permitting process made easier

Types of jobs/businesses we should attract:

1. Agri technology
2. Food processing
3. Construction and other ag related services

How to balance growth with farmland protection

1. Encourage best use of land
2. Grow up not out (intensify)
3. Encourage mix of housing (not all family subdivisions)

Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. Community interest is the priority driver
2. Contiguous development is critical (not hopscotching)
3. Servicing capability

Local Councils

Housing factors and challenges

1. Lack of infrastructure servicing capacity
2. Lots of processes to get through (studies, engineering assessments etc.)
3. Zoning is a barrier
4. DCs can be costly

How to balance growth with farmland protection

1. Limit expansion of towns & settlement areas
2. Engage with ag community stakeholders
3. Grow up not out, encourage infill

Types of jobs/businesses we should attract...

1. Ag and Ag tech
2. Small to midsize manufacturing
3. Independent local businesses
4. Food processing industry

Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. Infrastructure capacity
2. Does it serve the interests of the community?
3. Timeliness and commitment to develop
4. Are there already lands in the settlement area unused?

Public Open House

Housing factors and challenges

1. Servicing capability
2. Shortages in land
3. Affordability
4. Densification

Protect farmland by...

1. Intensification: Build up not out
2. Succession planning (farmers are older and difficult to entice next gen)

Types of jobs/businesses we should attract:

1. Small-medium size business
2. Farm to table businesses
3. Food production
4. Agriculture support services

Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. How easy is it service the land
2. Is the investor serious about developing or speculating?
3. Protect our high-quality farmland



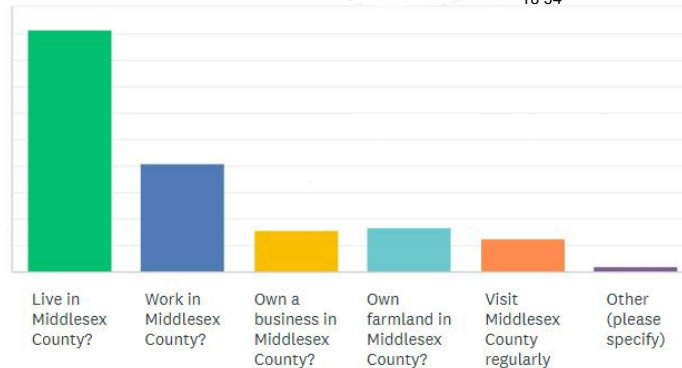
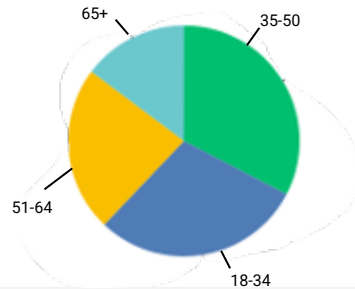
Community Survey

95 survey respondents

Demographics of respondents

39% Middlesex
Centre
22% North
Middlesex
9.5% Southwest
Middlesex
9.5% Strathroy-
Caradoc
7% Lucan
Biddulph

4% Thames Centre
2% Newbury
2% Adelaide
5% Other
(London, Hungry Hollow, Central Elgin, Lambton Shores)



What makes Middlesex County a great place to live?

- **Rural Charm with Urban Connectivity:** Community members strongly value Middlesex County's rural character—marked by tranquility, natural beauty, and a small-town feel—while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining access to modern amenities. Proximity to London, the 401/402 corridors, and essential services such as healthcare, education, and shopping enhances the county's appeal by offering the best of both rural and urban living.
- **Community Strength and Safety:** Residents highlight a deep appreciation for the county's welcoming, friendly atmosphere and strong sense of community. Middlesex is viewed as a safe and supportive environment that attracts a diverse population, including young families and retirees, all drawn to the region's quality of life, independence, and close-knit social fabric.

What would you like to see change/improve in the County over the next 10–20 years?

- **Smart Growth and Inclusive Planning:** Leadership should prioritize focused growth within serviced settlement areas, preserve farmland, expand housing options (including affordable and diverse types), and enhance local services, transportation, and amenities to support vibrant, connected communities.
- **Sustainable Economy and Responsive Governance:** Support economic diversification through business attraction and rural development incentives, protect natural and agricultural assets, and ensure transparent, community-informed decision-making processes.

Community Survey



Housing

Priorities to enable affordable housing



Top housing needs:

- 54% Single Detached Homes
- 46% Affordable Housing
- 35% Townhomes/Semi-detach
- 31% Seniors' Housing
- 27% Apartments & Condos

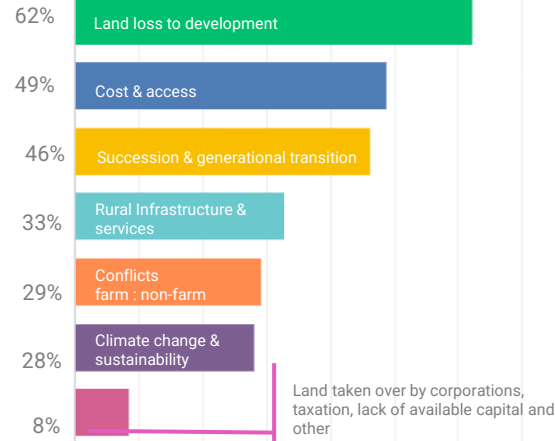
69% support new housing development near existing town/village centres

53% support higher-density new housing development



Agriculture

Top Agriculture or Rural Issues:



50% Limit urban sprawl by directing growth to designated Settlement Areas & **Restrict non-farm development** on prime agricultural land

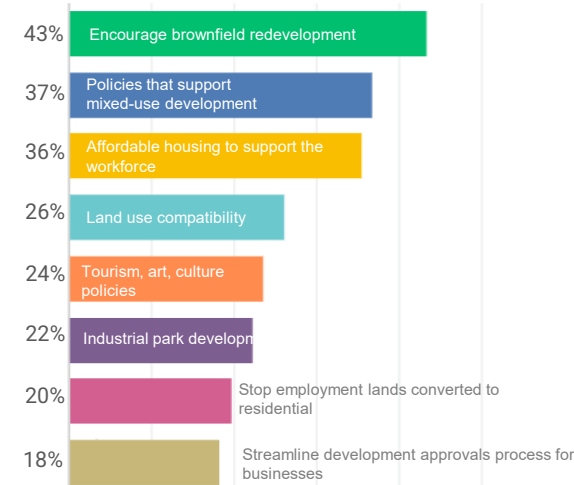
>30% Support local food systems and farm viability, Encourage higher-density development in existing Settlement Areas and encourage redevelopment or infill of underused properties

>15% Implement a monitoring and reporting program to assess land needs and inform



Economic Development

Priorities to better support economic development & innovation:



17% Experienced barriers starting or expanding a business such as high developmental costs, project delays, high land price, dominance of large corporations and cumbersome building approvals

Awareness of planning policies and zoning regulations limiting economic development

40% was not aware any barriers

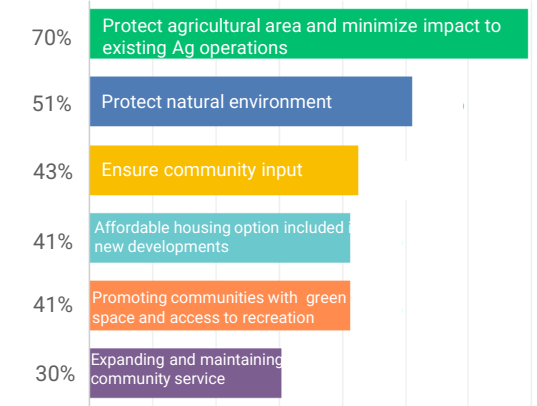
40% lack of flexibility in permitted land uses

22% Development approval process



Growth & Development

Top considerations for expansion of settlement area boundary



20% Plan growth to balance long-term financial impacts, support active transportation, secure land for jobs, and promote sustainable, climate-resilient development.

Prioritize **cost-effective, serviceable** land for development to **keep DCs low** and avoid the high infrastructure costs of expanding beyond established urban centers





QUARRY
C o n s u l t i n g

POLICY DISCUSSION

- 1 Settlement Area Boundary Expansions
- 2 Agricultural Matters
- 3 Additional Residential Units
- 4 Regionally Significant Employment Areas
- 5 Other Considerations



1. SETTLEMENT AREA BOUNDARY EXPANSIONS

The new Provincial Planning Statement removes the need for a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) to expand settlement areas.

Privately initiated Official Plan Amendments can now be considered for settlement area expansions.

A clear evaluation framework is necessary to assess proposals and uphold long-term planning objectives.

SETTLEMENT AREA BOUNDARY EXPANSIONS – WORKING DRAFT

The County's Growth Management framework acknowledges that population and employment growth will occur over the planning horizon. To ensure it is sustainable, growth must be carefully managed to minimize impacts on the Natural Heritage System and the Agricultural System, and coordinated with the timely provision of appropriate infrastructure and services.

These principles are critical to supporting long-term environmental protection, agricultural viability, and the efficient delivery of municipal services. Settlement area boundary expansions must be considered within this broader context to ensure responsible, well-planned growth and to support the achievement of complete communities.

An amendment to the local Municipal Official Plan will be required to facilitate the expansion or identification of a designated Settlement Area. Prior to the identification of a new Settlement Area or the expansion of the limits of an existing Settlement Area, the applicant shall provide the necessary background information to justify the new or expanded Settlement Area, in addition to the requirements listed in Section 2.3.6 of this Plan. This information must address:

SETTLEMENT AREA BOUNDARY EXPANSIONS — WORKING DRAFT

- a) the need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses;
- b) if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;
- c) whether the proposal reflects a logical integration with local servicing master plans;
- d) whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas;
- e) the evaluation of alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas and where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands;
- f) whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation formulae;
- g) whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance; and
- h) the new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development

SETTLEMENT AREA BOUNDARY EXPANSIONS — WORKING DRAFT

The population, housing, and employment forecasts in Appendix B of this Plan, along with the most recent Census data, shall form the basis for the determination of land needs.

Where full municipal services are planned or available, the use of private or communal wastewater treatment systems, including package treatment plants, shall not be permitted.

To support the coordination of growth management and infrastructure planning, local municipalities are encouraged to establish servicing capacity allocation policies. These policies should guide the allocation and, where appropriate, reallocation of available system capacity to ensure infrastructure is used efficiently and growth is directed to appropriate locations.

2. AGRICULTURAL MATTERS

The agricultural policies should be updated to reflect recent Provincial direction and to support a resilient agricultural system. Key changes include:

Implementing an Agricultural Systems Approach to protect the interconnected components of the rural landscape

Permitting additional residential units (ARUs) in prime agricultural areas (see previous)

Refining policies for surplus farm dwelling severances

Reviewing minimum agricultural parcel size

Potentially addressing inadvertent lot mergers

AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM — WORKING DRAFT

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Middlesex County's economy, culture, and rural identity. The County is committed to protecting and promoting agriculture not only as an essential industry but as a way of life that supports local food production, the creative rural economy, and long-term economic sustainability. The County recognizes the importance of comprehensive planning for the agricultural land base and the agri-food network that together form the Agricultural System.

The Agricultural System supports the viability of agricultural operations, ensures access to agri-supportive services and infrastructure, and fosters a strong and resilient agri-food sector. The policies of this Plan are intended to protect the agricultural system by limiting the introduction of uses that are incompatible with normal farm practices, such as non-farm residential and other sensitive land uses.

The sale of agricultural products grown or produced on the farm shall be permitted on the same property as an on-farm diversified use, provided the scale and nature of the use remains accessory to the principal agricultural operation.

SURPLUS FARM DWELLINGS — WORKING DRAFT

The creation of one new residential lot may be permitted for a residence rendered surplus to a farming operation as a result of a farm consolidation, ~~Consent to sever a residence surplus to a farming operation as a result of farm consolidation may be permitted,~~ provided the residence was built at least 10-years prior, the new lot will be limited to a minimum size needed to accommodate the use and appropriate sewage and water services, and provided that new residential dwellings are prohibited on any vacant remnant parcel of farmland created by the severance.

The County encourages local municipalities to include policies in their local official plan addressing considerations including minimizing the loss of agricultural land, addressing the retention of outbuildings with the residence surplus to a farming operation including maximum building size and permitted uses, adequacy of services, and Minimum Distance Separation

MINIMUM AGRICULTURAL PARCEL SIZE — EXISTING

“Consents for new farm lots are discouraged where the result is the creation of a farm lot less than a typical township lot of about 40 hectares. Consents for the creation of new farm lots shall be considered where both the size of the lands being severed and the lands being retained are appropriate to:

1. the type of agriculture being engaged in or proposed to be engaged in; and
2. the type of agricultural activity and farm lot size common in the area. In general, farm lot size shall be sufficiently large to create large contiguous farming blocks and to maintain flexibility to adapt to future changes in agriculture and to avoid the unwarranted fragmentation of farmland. A minimum farm lot size shall be established in the Zoning By-laws of the local municipalities;

A different minimum farm parcel size for local municipalities may be considered through an amendment to the County Official Plan provided that a study is carried out by the local municipality with the guidance and assistance of the Province, to demonstrate that the different farm parcel size is appropriate for the type of agricultural uses common in the local area, yet is sufficiently large enough to maintain flexibility for future changes to the type or size of agricultural operations.”

MINIMUM AGRICULTURAL PARCEL SIZE -STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on a review of the Agricultural Lot Sizes information presented to the committee by Stovel and Associates, staff recommend the following motion:

“THAT County Council maintain the existing policy framework and minimum agricultural lot size of about 40 hectares (100 ac)”

INADVERTENT LOT MERGERS — WORKING DRAFT

Existing lots that merged inadvertently due to common ownership may be separated by way of consent, provided:

- a) The severance reflects the original lot configuration;
- b) The subject property is still in the same ownership as when such merging occurred; and
- c) The severed and retained parcels meet road access requirements.

Applicants are required to provide evidence or legal documentation which demonstrates that the lots are still under the same ownership as when the merging occurred. Once separated, the severed and retained parcels shall be considered a parcel of land that existed on the date of that the inadvertent merger occurred.

RENEWABLE ENERGY — WORKING DRAFT

- a) Renewable and alternative energy systems shall be planned, designed, and constructed in a manner that avoids, or where avoidance is not possible, minimizes and mitigates adverse effects on surrounding land uses. This includes potential impacts from odour, noise, and other contaminants;
- b) All proposals shall prioritize public health and safety and demonstrate how risks will be minimized through appropriate design and siting measures;
- c) Sites for large-scale renewable or alternative energy systems must be of sufficient size to provide adequate setbacks from sensitive land uses, such as residential and institutional areas, in order to minimize potential impacts and ensure public safety;
- d) New or expanded renewable energy systems shall be developed in accordance with applicable provincial guidelines, standards, and procedures, and must demonstrate:
 - i. That potential adverse environmental and land use impacts are avoided or effectively mitigated;
 - ii. That risks to public health and safety are minimized; and
 - iii. That the long-term operational and economic viability of the facility is maintained.
- e) Large-scale solar farms shall not be permitted within the Agricultural Areas designation in accordance with Provincial Guidance.

3. ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS

The Provincial Planning Statement (2024) permits the establishment of Additional Residential Units (ARUs) within prime agricultural areas

While the County Official Plan currently provides high-level policy direction to guide the development of ARUs in agricultural areas, more detailed criteria are being considered through this Official Plan update

This includes related to the maximum size of ARUs, the clustering of buildings, and limitations on the severance of ARUs from the primary dwelling, among other considerations.

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — EXISTING POLICIES

The development of additional residential units shall be permitted as a means of increasing the diversity and stock of rental and affordable housing, creating opportunities for aging in place, and providing homeowners with additional sources of income. Additional residential units shall be permitted within Settlement Areas with full municipal water and sewage services as follows:

- a) The use of up to three residential units in a detached dwelling, semi-detached dwelling or rowhouse; or
- b) The use of two residential units in a detached dwelling, semi-detached dwelling, rowhouse, and a residential unit in a building or structure ancillary to a detached dwelling, semi-detached dwelling or rowhouse.

For additional clarity, the intent of this policy is to allow up to a total of three residential units per lot, which includes the primary dwelling unit, on properties in Settlement Areas with full municipal water and sewage services.

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — EXISTING POLICIES

Local municipal official plans and zoning by-laws shall address the following:

- a) the Building Code, Fire Code and all other Provincial, County, and Municipal standards,
- b) the provision of adequate access, including emergency access,
- c) that the additional residential unit(s) be clearly subordinate in scale and function to the primary unit, and
- d) not be permitted within hazard lands as defined and regulated by conservation authorities.

Specific to the creation of additional residential units outside of settlement areas, such uses shall be grouped with the primary dwelling, shall meet Minimum Distance Separation formulae, and shall be prohibited from being severed from the property unless as part of the severance of the primary dwelling unit as a residence surplus to a farming operation.

Garden suites, granny flats, and tiny homes or trailers are considered temporary uses and evaluated as such.

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — PAC MOTION

***“THAT** County Council consider including language in the OP to prohibit the severance of ARUs in rural areas and to address size, reverse ARUs and clustering.”*

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — WORKING DRAFT

Settlement Areas

ARUs in settlement areas are largely regulated by the Planning Act and allowed on a ‘parcel of urban land’ as-of-right and as such it is only proposed to add the the following policies to provide flexibility for municipalities to exceed three total units should they wish.

“On a parcel of urban residential land, as defined by the Planning Act, local municipalities may permit more than two Additional Residential Units within a detached dwelling, semi-detached dwelling, rowhouse or building ancillary to a detached dwelling, semi-detached dwelling or rowhouse in locations deemed appropriate by Council(s). Where full municipal services are not available, a total of two Additional Residential Units are permitted on eligible parcels.”

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — WORKING DRAFT

Agricultural Areas

It is proposed to add additional language to guide the establishment of ARUs within Agricultural Areas.

The development of Additional Residential Units (ARUs) outside of settlement areas shall be encouraged, where appropriate, as a means to increase the diversity and availability of housing options while maintaining agricultural character, avoiding off-site impacts on surrounding agricultural operations and minimizing land taken out of agricultural production.

Where a residential dwelling is permitted on a lot outside of settlement areas, up to two additional residential units shall be permitted, provided that, where two additional residential units are proposed, at least one of these additional residential units is located within or attached to the primary dwelling. For additional clarity, the intent of this policy is to allow up to a total of three residential units per lot, which includes the primary dwelling unit, in Agricultural Areas.

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — WORKING DRAFT

- a) A total of two Additional Residential Units are permitted on a lot outside of Settlement Areas where a residential dwelling is permitted, two Additional Residential Units are permitted within or attached to the primary dwelling, or one Additional Residential Unit within or attached to the primary dwelling and one in an accessory building.
- b) To mitigate potential impacts on surrounding agricultural operations and to minimize the amount of land removed from agricultural production, an Additional Residential Unit (ARU) located in an accessory building shall be clearly secondary and subordinate to the primary dwelling, and situated no more than 30 metres (98 feet) from the primary dwelling. The floor area of an ARU in an accessory building shall be based on the size of the primary dwelling as follows:
 - I. Where the primary dwelling has a ground floor area of 1 500 square feet (approximately 139 m²) or less, the ARU shall not exceed 75% of the ground floor area of the primary dwelling.
 - II. Where the primary dwelling has a ground floor area greater than 1 500 square feet, the ARU shall not exceed 50% of the ground floor area of the primary dwelling, to a maximum of 1,184 square feet (110 m²), whichever is less.

Notwithstanding the above, local municipalities may establish more restrictive provisions regarding the maximum allowable floor area or separation distance of ARUs located in accessory buildings.

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — WORKING DRAFT

- c) An Additional Residential Unit in an accessory building shall be located in a rear or interior side yard and shall be located within the established residential area on the lot that is generally comprised of the primary dwelling and accessory structures, outdoor amenity space, the driveway and on-site services.
- d) An Additional Residential Unit shall use the same driveway as the primary dwelling and sufficient parking areas for occupant use and emergency services shall be provided.
- e) The conversion of a primary dwelling on a lot to an Additional Residential Unit as a means to construct a larger dwelling on the same lot will not be permitted. Where a temporary use by-law exists to authorize two single detached dwellings on a property for a specified period of time, applications to convert the older dwelling to an Additional Residential Unit will not be permitted.
- f) An Additional Residential Unit shall not be severed from a lot, except in accordance with Section 4.5.3.4 a) of this Plan.

ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL UNITS — WORKING DRAFT

- g) The colocation of water and wastewater services is preferred. A municipality may require a well and septic report to demonstrate that the on-site water supply and septic system are adequate to serve the Additional Residential Unit.
- h) An Additional Residential Unit shall meet Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) I requirements and shall be located no closer to a neighbouring livestock operation than the existing primary dwelling unit.
- i) Additional Residential Units shall generally not be permitted where a lot or dwelling already contains other accessory residential dwellings (garden suites) and/or uses, including: a group home, boarding or lodging house; or a home occupation that is characterized by higher occupancy, such as a bed and breakfast, a farm vacation, short term rental, or other similar use. Notwithstanding this, Additional Residential Units shall be permitted on a lot in addition to farm worker housing.
- j) Local Municipalities may establish a process for converting existing temporary Garden Suites to Additional Residential Units.

4. REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYMENT AREAS

The County Official Plan could be amended to set the general framework for the establishment of Regionally Significant Employment Areas at the local level

Regionally Significant Employment Areas would constitute clusters of business and economic activities including manufacturing, research and development in connection with manufacturing, warehousing, goods movement, associated retail and office, and ancillary facilities

Regionally Significant Employment Areas would be established for large-scale investment that would have regional benefit that transcends municipal boundaries

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYMENT AREAS — WORKING DRAFT

Regionally Significant Employment Areas are large, fully serviced, contiguous tracts of land that may be established to attract large scale industry that will have regional benefits. Uses may range from traditional manufacturing, warehousing, goods movement, knowledge and innovation, and ancillary offices or office parks.

The County will support local municipalities to identify Regionally Significant Employment Areas. A local municipality will lead the process to identify and establish a Regionally Significant Employment Area, subject to the policies of this Plan and in consultation with the County. The identification of such areas shall be supported by appropriate planning justification and reflect alignment with County and Provincial policy objectives. Final designation shall be implemented through an amendment to the local Official Plan, including mapping on the applicable land use schedule.

The identification of a Regionally Significant Employment Area shall address the following:

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYMENT AREAS — WORKING DRAFT

- a) Consideration of the following key locational criteria to guide the identification of Regionally Significant Employment Areas:
 - i. Provincial Highways, County roads and connectivity between transportation infrastructure;
 - ii. London International Airport;
 - iii. Rail infrastructure;
 - iv. Transit;
 - v. Availability of municipal water and wastewater infrastructure; and
 - vi. Identifying areas of sufficient size to support economic opportunities;
- b) Whether the area is within a Settlement Area with full municipal services that are planned or available;

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYMENT AREAS — WORKING DRAFT

- c) Whether matters pertaining to land use compatibility can be achieved, including a 300 metre separation distance from sensitive land uses; and
- d) Whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance;

Sensitive land uses that are not ancillary to the primary employment use shall be limited in employment areas and only permitted if such use can comply with D-6 Guidelines. More specifically, on lands within 300 metres of employment areas, development shall avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate potential impacts on the long-term economic viability of employment uses within existing or planned employment areas, in accordance with provincial guidelines. Detailed land use policies shall be implemented in the local municipal Official Plan.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the key topic areas, several other considerations were identified through ongoing discussions with the Committee. While these items may not fall under a specific theme or are more technical in nature, they remain important to the overall update. These include:

- Aligning with the updated provincial planning context

- Reflecting the County's updated Council Strategic Plan

- Applying a solutions-oriented planning approach

- Providing greater flexibility for local municipalities to rely on and implement the policies of the County Official Plan

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN — WORKING DRAFT

The County of Middlesex has developed a County Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan establishes a broad, long-term vision for the County and is structured around four strategic priorities that include goals, objectives, and outcome-based performance measures that provide the foundation for decision-making, guide resource allocation, and help ensure that all efforts are aligned with the County's long-term vision and values. ~~includes specific objectives that focus on developing goals and targets that will help ensure that the County is positioned to capitalize on future opportunities as they arise.~~

In short, the strategic priorities ~~objectives~~ established in the Middlesex County Strategic Plan as they pertain to land use planning emphasize the following goals:

Enhance overall economic well-being and community prosperity by fostering a sustainable and thriving local economy

Strengthen collaboration with local municipalities and regional partners to improve economic efficiency, enhance service delivery, and support regional development in alignment with community priorities.

Expand and upgrade critical infrastructure to enhance resilience, efficiency, and accessibility while prioritizing sustainability and longterm cost-effectiveness.

Modernize the County's administrative capabilities to strengthen decision-making, improve service delivery, and achieve better community outcomes.

EXPLANATION OF POLICY CONTEXT — WORKING DRAFT

County Council acknowledges the role of the Province of Ontario in the planning process. The policies of this Official Plan have regard for the long-range land use interests of the Province as noted in Section 2 of the Planning Act, which will be listed in the draft Official Plan.

The policies of this plan are consistent with those expressed in the Provincial Planning Statement (2024). The land use planning framework is guided by a set of core principles aimed at supporting the development of complete, inclusive, and resilient communities, including:

Promoting a sufficient supply and mix of housing to meet a full range of needs and affordability levels

Supporting a strong, diverse, and competitive economy

Directing growth to settlement areas to optimize infrastructure and protect agricultural and natural systems

Encouraging compact, transit-supportive development where appropriate

Protecting public health and safety through hazard mitigation and climate resilience

Recognizing and supporting the role of Indigenous communities through early and meaningful engagement

These principles work together to ensure Ontario remains a prosperous, livable, and sustainable province for current and future generations.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS — WORKING DRAFT

“Recognizing that some proposals may not neatly fit within the existing planning framework, the County supports a structured, solutions-oriented approach to policy interpretation and implementation. This method ensures decisions are guided by the public interest, informed by policy objectives, and responsive to local context, while upholding transparency and procedural fairness. It emphasizes early issue identification, alignment with policy intent, consideration of process options, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and ongoing refinement. The overarching goal is to balance innovation and responsiveness with sound planning principles and regulatory integrity.”

“To ensure consistency and adaptability to change, Local Municipal Official Plans may rely on the County Official Plan as the applicable policy framework as an alternative to including the same policies within the Local Official Plan.”

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Committee may identify any other topics for further discussion or analysis.



NEXT STEPS

Thank you for your time and consideration as a member of the Committee!

Future meeting to be called by Chair as needed.

