



# County of Middlesex OP Alignment Exercise

## Steering Committee Discussion

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## County of Middlesex OP Alignment Exercise

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### Agenda



Purpose of Exercise



Key Themes to Consider



Policy Research of Seven County Official Plans



Discussion



Next Steps



## Purpose of Exercise

- Review the objectives of the Economic Development Strategic Plan, Corporate Strategic Plan on the current Official Plan
- Identify the range of policy topics that should be supported by and reflected in the Official Plan
- Reflect on the County's current policy framework and compare to other relevant Official Plans
- Provide a matrix of policy statements that compare the County's current policy direction against the approach others have taken to address similar issues
- Prepare draft policy recommendations



## Corporate Strategic Plan Objectives

- Connecting Through Infrastructure
  - Encourage and advocate through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure recognizing our unserved and underserved areas
- Strengthening our Economy
  - Support opportunities to create stronger and sustainable agriculture sector
  - Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent and investment
  - Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas



## Economic Development Strategic Plan – Key themes

- Lifestyle is a key differentiator
- Location spurs business growth and entrepreneurship
- Broadband, transit, and infrastructure gaps limit growth
- Challenges of attracting and retaining talent
- Lack of housing options to accommodate growth
- Focus on agriculture and technology-based development
- Potential for remote workers
- Targeted focus on main streets and rural tourism
- FDI should build on existing strengths
- Focus on cohesion and collaboration



## **Economic Development Strategic Plan – Key objectives**

1. Invest in people and places via rural revitalization
2. Entice talented workers and entrepreneurs to relocate here by leveraging the pace of rural life and nearby urban amenities
3. Attract investment in tech-based manufacturing, food production, and ag-tech
4. Advocate for investment readiness and implement improvements in business development services



## Key Themes for the Official Plan Review

- *Community Improvement Plans*
- Broadband Infrastructure
- *Employment Lands including Conversion Policies*
- Economic Diversity/Economic Prosperity
- *Affordable and Accessible Housing*
- *Agriculture/Agri-Business Opportunities*
- *Support for Arts, Culture and Tourism*
- Quality of Place and Cultural Heritage



## Comparative Counties Official Plans

- Norfolk County (2021)
- County of Wellington (2021)
- Prince Edward County (2021)
- County of Lambton (2020)
- County of Perth (2020)
- Huron County (2015)
- County of Elgin (2015)





## Comparative Approach

Official Plan	Community Improvement Plans	Employment Lands including Conversion Policies	Affordable and Accessible Housing	Agriculture/Agri-Business Opportunities	Arts, Culture and Tourism
Norfolk County (2021) (Single Tier)	<p>The County OP supports the use of CIPs to revitalize underutilized land and downtown areas. The OP supports the preparation and adoption of CIPs that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage a range of housing types and affordable housing</li> <li>- Improve tourism infrastructure including agri-tourism facilities</li> </ul> <p>The County had a CIP for its urban areas and downtown cores and a Rural CIP that provides incentives and programs to promote investment in tourism, agri-business. These two CIPs have been combined and provisions now apply to urban, hamlet and agricultural areas</p>	<p>Stated objective to provide employment land with access to strategic transportation corridors</p> <p>Protecting agricultural activities and the agricultural land base from the intrusion of incompatible uses and providing opportunities for small-scale business opportunities that are secondary to farm operations</p> <p>The County recognizes that the historic location of employment land may not satisfy the contemporary or future economic needs. Will consider applications to amend this Plan to re-designate land designated Industrial through a comprehensive review, consistent with the requirements of the Provincial Policy Statement, demonstrating that the land is not required</p>	<p>The County OP promotes affordable and accessible housing. The OP provides a definition of affordable housing where annual accommodations costs do not exceed 30% of gross annual income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sets target that 25% of new housing is affordable</li> <li>- Set that 10% of new housing be affordable to low-income households</li> <li>- Add to non-traditional housing options by encouraging innovative design and adaptability characteristics</li> </ul>	<p>The County OP dedicates section 4.4 Promoting Agriculture to growth of farm businesses as a means of supplementary income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate the development of on-farm diversified businesses</li> <li>- Seeks to provide support to farm operators through small business consulting services and to facilitate training and the dissemination of information relating to best practices for farm operations</li> </ul>	<p>The OP encourages agri-tourism and ecotourism within the County. Ecotourism and on-farm accommodations are indicated as focus areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support ecotourism destinations that promote learning from and experiencing natural features and wildlife</li> <li>- Encourage the establishment of on-farm overnight tourist accommodations for visitors to the County's rural areas</li> </ul>



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County of Wellington (2021) (Upper Tier)	<p>The OP states that the County Council may participate in a municipality's Community Improvement Plan and may make grants and loans to the Council of a lower tier municipality for the purpose of carrying out a Community Improvement Plan</p> <p>Through a County-wide CIP, Wellington County provides leadership in community improvement planning by offering incentives to eligible owners and tenants of lands and buildings in key sectors and areas of economic activity. The County's Invest Well Programme works together with the Member Municipal Community Improvement Plans</p> <p>Priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Using Land Strategically</li> <li>-Providing Rental Housing</li> <li>-Improving Building Infrastructure</li> <li>-Diversifying the Economy</li> <li>-Promoting Tourism</li> </ul>	<p>Secondary agricultural areas can accommodate a broader range of residential, employment and community uses are allowed than in prime agricultural areas so long as the use does not adversely impact existing agricultural operations and is in keeping with the rural character of the area</p> <p>Rural employment lands are intended to provide locations for business activities that may be better served by sites outside urban areas</p> <p>Conversion of employment lands (Industrial, Highway Commercial and Rural Employment Areas) within employment areas to non-employment uses which, for the purposes of this sub-section includes major retail uses, may be permitted only through a municipal comprehensive review</p>	<p>The OP states that a minimum of 25% of new housing in the County will be affordable to low and moderate income households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Garden suites are permitted on farm within the OP</li> <li>- It is expected that affordable housing will be provided within urban centres</li> <li>- There is a need to diversify the housing inventory beyond single family dwellings</li> </ul>	<p>Prime agricultural land will be protected and normal farming operations should not be hindered. The County OP provides for home-based as well as small scale businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small scale commercial, industrial and institutional uses permitted if there is adequate infrastructure</li> </ul>	<p>The County OP provides for recreational areas for the purpose of cottages, tent and trailer parks, active and passive recreation and golf courses.</p> <p>The Greenlands System is also recognized as having spiritual value providing visual pleasure, tranquility, recreation and renewal essential to human health and well being</p>



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County of Lambton (2020) (Upper Tier)	<p>No active CIPs</p> <p>Policy framework recognizes CIPs are a tool for creating affordable housing and remediation of contaminated sites</p> <p>The development of Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) is an encouraged means of implementing affordable housing plans in local municipalities.</p>	<p>To ensure planning for growth, municipalities can designate a 20 yr supply; also speaks to trails connecting E.L.</p> <p>Commercial and industrial activities encouraged to locate within fully serviced employment areas within Urban Centres and Settlements, as well as Highway 402 Service Centres</p> <p>Establish business parks which allow prestige industrial and office-based uses to locate in a setting with uses of a similar quality and orientation.</p> <p>The County will encourage the development of the potential Highway 402 Service Centre areas for land uses that are functionally dependent upon proximity to a controlled access highway</p>	<p>The County OP supports affordable housing as an important component of community development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to community services and facilities including public transit facilities is important</li> <li>- should be in proximity to downtown hubs and cultural nodes when possible.</li> <li>- secure, long-term housing as a foundation for quality of life</li> </ul>	<p>On-farm diversified uses are strongly encouraged in order to provide farmers greater opportunity to obtain additional sources of income and to promote entrepreneurship, innovation, and business incubation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- home-occupations, home-industries, agri-tourism, and value-added agricultural products from the farm operation.</li> </ul>	<p>Agri-tourism is supported within the OP to help diversify farmers income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- uses are to be primarily rooted in activities promoting enjoyment of and/or education in farm operation, rural culture and economy, food and crop production, livestock, unique local foods, and/or agricultural history.</li> </ul>



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Prince Edward County (2021) (Single tier)	<p>CIP planning may be undertaken to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- bolster local community growth, including with regard to agriculture, arts and culture, tourism, commerce and industry</li> <li>- encourage a diversity of housing types to meet the changing needs of residents and <i>affordable</i> housing</li> <li>- address climate change mitigation and adaptation</li> </ul> <p>Historically, PEC had a Creative Rural Economy CIP aimed at creative workers and entrepreneurs and focused on four targeted sectors of the local economy— gastronomy, creative industries, green business and healthcare &amp; wellness.</p> <p>No active CIP</p>	<p>Ensure there are sufficient designated and zoned employment lands to meet the projected needs of the County's target industries.</p> <p>A Rural Industrial Lands (RILs) designation identifies existing rural industrial properties that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accommodate important employment generating businesses within the County</li> <li>- are expected to provide diversity to the land supply for business</li> <li>- do not use <i>significant</i> amounts of water in their operation and which do not produce <i>significant</i> amounts of effluent, consistent with rural servicing levels which rely on private water and sanitary sewage systems.</li> </ul>	<p>To create a livable community and diversify the mix of housing options</p> <p><i>Villages</i> will, at a minimum, provide opportunities for all forms of <i>affordable housing</i>, community gardens and <i>urban agriculture</i>, and for local residents to meet their daily needs for shopping and <i>recreation</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affordable housing considered important to support agricultural industry</li> </ul>	<p>Policy recognized as an important economic driver and employment source through primary and secondary activities</p> <p>Rural Industrial Land designation to accommodate industrial, manufacturing, and creative rural economy</p>	<p>The County seeks to leverage its natural amenities including "viewscape" and heritage architecture to along tourism corridors to promote tourism sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provisions to support the development of attractions, scenic overlooks, facilities along tourism corridors</li> <li>- Cultural landscapes also contribute to the pastoral quality that contributes to the County's unique character and distinct rural charm</li> </ul>



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County of Perth (2020 Consolidation)  (Upper Tier)	Community Improvement policies have identified the need to consider both the rural and urban components of the County.  No active CIPs	<p>Serviced settlement areas will accommodate most of the non-farm related growth that is to occur in the County. Restrictions on use of agricultural land carried forward from previous plan</p> <p>To expand the employment opportunities available to the residents of the Municipality; (c) to encourage the development of light, dry industry which will not impose a burden on municipal service systems;</p> <p>Plan targets the development, attraction, and retention of small business investment, with a specific focus on downtown business districts</p>	The County OP supports affordable housing and encourages secondary dwellings, low, medium and high density, special needs housing, infilling and intensification.	The County OP encourages the development of service-related businesses, value-added operations, secondary farm occupation opportunities, and technological improvements (including bio-technical advancements)	The County OP states that there is little potential for intensive recreational activities in the County of Perth. The predominance of agricultural activities and the relatively flat topography of the County are generally not conducive to intensive recreational activities.



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County of Elgin (2015) (Upper Tier)	<p>Local municipalities are encouraged to develop CIPs.</p> <p>The OP specifically backs the use of CIPs to promote and support agriculture and cultural heritage provided the local municipal Official Plan includes appropriate policies to support such programs.</p> <p>The Elgincentives CIP is a County-wide framework for community improvement planning administered and funded by participating lower-tier municipalities in partnership with Elgin County.</p> <p>The Savour Elgin/Elgin Arts Trail Supplemental Grant, provides a bonus grant where the establishment of a new eligible use that will also meet the criteria of the 'Savour Elgin' and "Elgin Arts Trail" programs.</p>	<p>Encourages local municipalities to provide for the broadest range of employment uses (depending on available servicing) in their employment areas</p> <p>Local municipalities are encouraged to focus <i>new development</i> in <i>settlement areas</i>, while permitting appropriate rural industrial and commercial growth in accordance with the County OP</p> <p>Proposals to convert lands within an Employment or Industrial designation in a lower tier Official Plan to another type of land use will be reviewed through a <i>comprehensive review</i> as defined by the OP</p>	<p>The County OP ensuring that housing is available to all ages, abilities, incomes and household sizes and encourages the use of surplus public lands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- located in areas near public transportation, jobs, and essential goods and services</li> </ul>	<p>Agriculture is recognized as an important industry within the County OP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommends the creation of an agricultural advisory committee to provide advice and act as a direct and on-going liaison between the agricultural community and County Council</li> <li>- establish fiscal tools including innovative tax policies, reduced development charges, and venture capitals for innovative agriculture</li> </ul>	<p>The County OP leverages tourism amenities such as waterfront areas including ports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- scenic driving routes and other tourism destinations with <i>settlement areas</i> and the high volumes of potential tourist traffic along Highway 401</li> </ul>



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Official Plan	Community Improvement Plans	Employment Lands including Conversion Policies	Affordable and Accessible Housing	Agriculture/Agri-Business Opportunities	Arts, Culture and Tourism
Huron County (2015) (Upper Tier)	Not currently enacted or utilized	No mention of E.L. or employment.	Not addressed in OP	No specific provisions	Not addressed in OP

# Steering Committee Discussion

A discussion of land use matters/concerns in the County





# Employment Lands including Conversion Policies

1. What are the key issues for Middlesex County ?
2. Based on what you heard today, what considerations need to be reflected in the Official Plan

### Discussion Notes:

- Limited industrial areas particularly along Hwy 402 (Thorndale Ind. Park – is sold out), there is an increase in demand for development lands but there are constraints on the system including lack of land and servicing
- There are constraints due to servicing, we [County] need to focus on employment conversion therefore need policies to support and encourage growth (specifically along the highway corridor)
- Food Production is paramount and prime agricultural land needs to be protected. We need to think about do we want “Food or factories?” Other counties are intensifying food production and losing agricultural land. Other counties OPs missed the importance of food production so there is an opportunity to Middlesex to approach it differently
- The County is heavily reliant on Agriculture and residential, we [County] should focus on Foreign Direct Investment and we [County] need to start focussing on industrial growth
- Employment lands go hand in hand with employment, therefore consideration to employees and ties into housing issues (specifically service industry, warehousing etc), the current housing supply is very limited., An increase in density of housing supply impacts affordable housing [helps to add affordable housing].
- WE [County] need to learn from other areas. There are employers/facilities located far away from urban areas and they have a greater challenge attracting employees because of the reliance on [personal] vehicles; manufactures retention is major issue and this relates to location of these business and transportation infrastructure
- Amazon is coming to Elgin County, are there policies to support spin off of industries around Middlesex



# Affordable and Accessible Housing

1. What are the key issues for Middlesex County ?
2. Based on what you heard today, what considerations need to be reflected in the Official Plan

### Discussion:

- Are there open store fronts, are there opportunities for housing to be located above ground floor commercial businesses. We [County] need opportunities [spaces] for people to rent when arriving in the community, there is a major draw to rural areas now due to COVID-19, people want to step up from renting to ownership
- Understanding difference between attainable and affordable – attainable in today's market could be \$1800/m rent. Municipalities need to incentivize and switch commercial into mom and pop units, creating relationship between builders and developers and opportunities through CMHC. Need a transportation network – this is key. Can not walk to most Industrial Parks.
- There is presently a pilot project to connect communities (follow up with Cara as to specific communities)
- Any updates to OP need to address diversity of housing stock, should be open minded to low and mid-rise buildings. “To bring people to place”
- Intensification is necessary action by Municipalities, there is an opportunity for communities to redevelop downtowns (perhaps build higher buildings), Municipalities can make it easier to intensify built form – to go up. Opportunity to work with home builders association. Red tape reduction to intensify to not take farm land out of production. “We can do better”. Continuing to build out can create issues around servicing. “We need a better vision”
- Intensifying so that people can live in smaller areas, need to consider localized green spaces and walkability so that people can integrate into community including supporting local business “It’s a holistic approach”



# Agriculture/Agri-Business Opportunities

1. What are the key issues for Middlesex County?
2. Based on what you heard today, what considerations need to be reflected in the Official Plan

### Discussion:

- Ag continues to be a key sector within the County, backbone of Ec therefore need to be respectful of value. Opportunities to value added Ag.
- NIMBYism - Always a part [an issue] when something new is introduced, NIMBYism can be addressed through effective communications [by County]
- Ec Dev and Planning need to be working together. Encourage Ag business (not large scale, consider Ag tourism, Prince Edward County encourages smaller scale Ag, land to stay as Ag and contribute to economy), smaller scale industrial can be an option
- We need to do a better job in promoting/supporting on farm diverse uses, outside of farming in traditional sense, promote through signage program, mapping and advertising
- OMAFRA has been pushing Value added “win-win for county and Ag sector”, but allowing smaller parcels of land may sterilize a neighbouring farm because of minimum distance separations so there needs to be considerations about size of land and neighbours concerns
- When working in Ec Dev, we [County] need to grow with a business because it can be challenging for them to scale (access, servicing issues). Developing policy is necessary for the growth of local businesses
- Young farmers, existing farmers do not want to be tenants, but to have new farmers enter business, farm severances is a challenge. Need to deal with brownfields when looking to intensify. Can we have a mandate to limit to not Class 1,2,3 lands [higher quality farm land] so as to not build on the best land around. Perhaps build out to “poorer quality land”



# Support for Arts, Culture and Tourism

1. What are the key issues for Middlesex County ?
2. Based on what you heard today, what considerations need to be reflected in the Official Plan

### Discussion:

- County became DMO for Tourism, still fairly new. County has made a strategic move to support Tourism. Tourism is listed as key item in County Strat Plan and Ec Dev Strat Plan. Council has backed Tourism development recently. The County is working with regional partners as well. Challenges around Ag Tourism development because of original intent of the land use and trying to move this as it changes over the years. Arts and Culture speaks to intensification and diversity, and changes over time, should be reflected in OP (NOTE LM other counties have tied A&C into sustainability, also creating corridors)
- County has a history of supporting initiatives such as Main Street Middlesex program5 Municipalities now have CIPs, another coming online in 6mos, wording of Ec Dev Strat Plan makes lots of reference to sense of place. There are initiatives to support infrastructure development currently in our Municipalities – how can the County best support these initiatives?
- As part of land use, green and public spaces need to also look at policies that relate to these arts, culture and tourism. For example how can the County be proactive around guidelines of uses
- Revitalization attracts people to the area but one challenge is having people understand the economic value of arts, culture and tourism (ex. Live theatre), Middlesex is in good position to revitalize downtowns to make them attractive arts & culture centres, Ec Dev benefits need to be communicated (broader value to city, residents)
- Downtown Revitalization program and Affordable Housing – there is a big connection between arts & culture because those artists and tourism workers require affordable housing
- There needs to be a three prong approach [employment, where to live and arts and culture] to attracting people to community (ex. Kingsville), especially when it comes to relocation considerations (first they 'love the community – A&C) Quality of place is very important.
- LM-youth retention and drawing youth back to community supports the vibrancy



# Community Improvement Plans

1. Based on what you heard today how can this tool be used more effectively?
2. What additional considerations need to be reflected in the Official Plan

### Discussion

- CIPs are very important, the Main Street Middlesex program (in place for a decade or more) in many ways led to other CIPs.
- There has been an evolution within the County but now it is a question of how Council supports CIPs ongoing (particularly the lower tier municipalities). The private sector is making investments and they need to be incentivized. Public also needs to be informed of value of CIPs. Also CIPs can be used for economic resiliency and recovery.
- Great to see the creation of CIPs and efforts to bolster them, we need to capitalize on emerging initiatives.
- From Community Futures position – entrepreneurs are asking what grants and incentives exist and CIPs are a great place to start those conversations.
- Municipal budget to support locally business could allocate funds to assist intensification and redevelopment efforts, Community Futures has additional funds to support new/local businesses [thereby leveraging any municipal funds]
- LM business support and recovery (COVID), important to note commitment of Municipalities

# Next Steps

- Incorporate feedback from today's session into a deeper examination of specific OP content
- Next Steering Committee meeting in November

# Thank you!

Q+A