

What is the purpose of the AAR?

The goal of this study is to identify Agricultural Areas for long-term protection in the Counties Official Plan.

This study is being undertaken because protection of agricultural resources is a Provincial public interest and a requirement for the study was included in the Counties' Official Plan.

What are Agricultural Areas?

The Province provides that Agricultural Areas are areas where the best quality soils dominate and includes associated lands with less good quality soil, as well as areas with a local concentration of farms exhibiting characteristics of ongoing agriculture. A systems approach may include rural lands that help create a connected productive land base for agriculture.



Why are Agricultural Areas important?

Only about 7 per cent of Canada's land can be farmed.¹ Ontario makes up 7.7 per cent of this total farm area, but accounts for 25.5 percent of total farms in Canada, having a significant economic impact.² In 2021, Canada exported nearly \$82.2 billion in agriculture

and food products.³ However, Ontario loses agricultural land every day, losing over 20% between 1976 and 2021.⁴ Agricultural land is finite and non-renewable. Great care must be taken to make sure we have this resource for generations of farmers to come.⁵

Sources:

¹ Agriculture in Canada, The Canadian Encyclopedia, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/agriculture-in-canada>

² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/96-325-x/2021001/article/00006-eng.htm>

³ <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/canadas-agriculture-sectors/overview-canadas-agriculture-and-agri-food-sector>

⁴ Farmland Policy, Ontario Farmland Trust, <https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/what-we-do/farmland-policy>

⁵ <http://omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/permitteduses.html>

What does this mean?

The result of the study is expected to be a new map of the Agricultural Area designation for adoption by amendment to the Counties' Official Plan. Some lands will remain in their current designation, some lands will change from Rural Lands to Agricultural Area and some lands will change from Agricultural Area to Rural Lands.

Policies applicable to the recommended designation will guide development on the subject lands.

Generally, **uses permitted under the Agricultural Area designation include:**

- Agriculture;
- Agriculture related (including farm-related commercial and industrial uses);
- Aggregate operations;

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- Home occupations and home industry;
- On-farm diversified uses (e.g. sales outlets, agri-tourism); and/or
- Secondary farm residence and additional dwelling units.

Uses permitted under the Rural Lands designation are broader and include the uses permitted under the Agricultural Area designation as well as:

- Limited locally appropriate residential uses;
- Cemeteries;
- Rural industrial/commercial uses that are resource based or located along a rural commercial area/corridor; and/or
- Recreational and tourist commercial uses.

Can I still build a dwelling on my vacant lot of record in the Agricultural Area?

Your ability to construct a dwelling will not be altered from its current rights.



Will I lose severance rights?

For some properties (generally those changing from Rural Lands to Agricultural Area), severance policies will be more restrictive than before. For other properties (generally those lands changing from Agricultural Area to Rural Lands), more permissive severance rights will apply. The impact to your property will depend on a

number of factors, including whether all or only part of the property is impacted by the designation changes, past severance activity on the property and the ability to comply with all applicable severance and general policies.

In the Rural Lands designation, severance policies vary by municipality and eligibility will depend on the severance history of the property as well as other policy considerations such as compliance with Minimum Distance Separation formula, entrance permissions, other designations on/in proximity to the property, ability to be considered limited locally appropriate rural development, etc..

Generally, within the Agricultural Area designation, landowners can only sever a lot for a farm use (100 acres or 40 hectares minimum lot size) or for a surplus farm dwelling as a result of farm consolidation. This is a long-time Provincial restriction through the Provincial Policy Statement intended to prevent agricultural lands from being lost to residential or other non-agricultural uses.



Will this change impact my taxes?

No, you will not pay more in taxes because of changes from the Agricultural Area to the Rural Lands designation or vice versa. Property taxes are based on use and not the land use designation under the

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Counties' Official Plan. For information about how property assessments are conducted, please visit the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation link – www.mpac.ca/en/PropertyTypes

Can I still build an accessory structure on my property?

Yes, landowners can construct accessory structures (e.g. shed, pool) if they are permitted to do so under the existing zoning and can meet the zoning regulatory provisions (i.e. setbacks from property lines). Even if the Official Plan designation and zoning is changed to agricultural, residential accessory structures will still be a permitted use.



Will this change impact my ability to get a mortgage?

While not a land use planning issue, staff checked with various sources, including a legal expert in real estate/mortgages, and changing the land use designation on a property from rural to agricultural (or vice versa) does not have an impact on whether or not a lender should deem it adequate for whatever loan is under consideration.

Most lenders will not lend on the security of vacant land, regardless of designation or zoning. Typically, the value of the loan relates to the home and 2 to 3 acres surrounding the home.

It is also understood there may be a reluctance to provide loans for agriculturally zoned lands due to fear the mortgagee may invoke the "Farm Debt Mediation Act" (FDMA). However, this Act applies to all farming for "commercial purposes" regardless of official plan designations. The FDMA exists to provide farmers with a period of time to demonstrate long-term viability of the farm to creditors in default circumstances.



Will this impact the market value of my property?

A designation change may impact the market value of property (for sales purposes) if there is a resultant loss of land division rights.

What are the next steps?

Property owners are encouraged to speak with Counties' staff and/or the consultant regarding the proposed mapping anytime until a decision is made by Council. Minor amendments may be made to the mapping resulting from these conversations.

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At this time a public meeting date has not been set. To implement the study, a public meeting will be held for a proposed Official Plan Amendment to implement the final recommended mapping. This meeting will be held before the Counties' Planning Advisory Committee (PAC). **Contact elaine.mallory@uclg.on.ca or 613-342-3840/800-770-2170 ext. 2422 to be directly notified of that meeting.**



After the public meeting, the PAC will provide a recommendation to Council regarding the proposed amendment. Council will then make its decision. Notice of the decision of Council will be shared with all those who have provided their email and/or mailing addresses to the Counties.

If the Amendment is approved, there will be a 20-day appeal period following Council's decision. Anyone who participated in the Official Plan Amendment process can submit an appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT). Details on the appeal process will be outlined in the notice of adoption that is distributed following the final decision.

The designation changes will be final if there are no appeals or after a decision by the OLT on any appeals. The relevant policies will then apply to the affected lands. Local Official Plans and zoning by-laws will be updated to reflect the new designations in the following years.



What if I do not agree with the evaluation of my land?

If you do not agree with the proposed designation, you should speak with or email Counties' staff and/or the consultant to confirm your understanding of the evaluation, scoring and any special considerations regarding your property. If you continue to disagree with the proposed designation or scoring, attend the public meeting to provide a written or oral submission to the Planning Advisory Committee.

**SUGGESTIONS
& COMMENTS**

We welcome your feedback