

Durham Region

Total Land Area (Census 2016)¹: 252,380 Ha
Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 118,498 Ha
Area of Region in the Greenbelt³: 208,036 ha
Percent of Region in the Greenbelt: 82%
Gross Farm Receipts (2016)⁴: \$321.7 million
Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm: \$2,715
Population (2016)¹: 645,862



Growth Rate 2006-2011¹: 8.4%
Growth Rate 2011-2016: 6.2%

Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (including urban, residential, and employment)	1,723 ha
Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation	56 ha
Land designated as a prime agricultural area with a site-specific amendment to allow additional uses	18 ha

Purpose of the Summary

This region summary is part of a wider study on farmland availability in Ontario. The study quantifies the conversion of prime agricultural areas based on Official Plan Amendments in upper and single-tier municipalities across the province over a 14-year study period from 2000-2014. This summary is meant to provide detail of the findings in Durham Region. In conjunction with similar case studies from other counties/regions in Ontario, these findings will form the basis of the University of Guelph's *Measuring Farmland Conversion* research project.

Methods in Brief

The study involved the examination of the Durham Regional Official Plan (ROP) and Regional Official Plan Amendments (ROPA). In Durham, the files which document ROPAs adopted and approved by the Region and/or the Ontario Municipal Board during the years 2000 to 2014 were compiled and provided electronically by staff at the Region's planning department. The assistance of staff at Durham Region Planning and Development are appreciated in making this research possible. Changes in farmland availability have been captured in three categories:

- 1) Prime agricultural areas redesignated to a development designation (including but not limited to urban, residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational designations);
- 2) Prime agricultural areas redesignated to a rural designation;
- 3) Land designated as a prime agricultural area with a site-specific amendment to allow additional uses.

Housekeeping type amendments have not been tallied as contributing to farmland conversion. Housekeeping type amendments arise as ROP schedules are updated to align land use designations with more accurate parcel lines, or to reflect existing physical features.

Agricultural Land Use Designations in Durham Region

During the course of the study period in Durham Region, land use designations for agricultural land underwent a substantial revision. Prior to 2008, agricultural land was designated as either *Permanent Agricultural Reserve* or *General Agricultural Area*. The *Permanent Agriculture Reserve* designation captured farmland of the highest quality in the region and its policies restricted uses to agricultural and farm related uses. In the *General Agricultural Area* designation, agriculture and farm related uses were defined as the primary use, with compatible non-agricultural uses, such as equestrian uses, kennels, allotment gardens and fur and sod farms, also permitted⁶. Following the direction of the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement, Amendment 114 to Durham's Regional Official Plan, approved by the OMB in 2008, adopted a new land use designation for *Prime Agricultural Areas*. Lands formerly designated in the *Permanent Agricultural Reserve* became the *Prime Agricultural Areas*, while lands in the *General Agricultural Area* underwent further study before being re-categorized as either a *Prime Agricultural Area*, or as *Major Open Space*. The *Major Open Space* designation, is intended to serve as a conservation designation, but which also includes prime agricultural lands and lands of lesser agricultural significance⁷. The Durham ROP also defines a *Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve*, identifying lands intended to be protected for agricultural use in perpetuity, as part of the Central Pickering Development Plan. These lands were formerly intended to be developed in conjunction with a federal airport. The *Permanent Agricultural Reserve* and the *Prime Agricultural Area* designations were considered in this study for the conversion of prime agricultural lands.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Development Designations: Over the course of the study period, two ROPAs pertained to the conversion of *Prime Agricultural Areas*. ROPA 128 redesignated 1,610 hectares of *Prime Agricultural Areas* to *Living Areas* and *Employment Areas* as part of the Region's conformity exercise with the Provincial *Growth Plan*, adopted by Regional Council in 2009 and approved by the OMB in 2010. Through ROPA 128, a deferral was lifted on lands formerly identified as *Differed Living Area* – these lands have been included in the total. Also as part of ROPA 128, an additional 48 hectares of land formerly designated as *Living Area* in the Region's 2004 Official Plan were returned to the *Prime Agricultural Area*. ROPA 128 converted a net 1,562 hectares of prime agricultural land to a development designation. Following the recommendations of a 2002 study which identified the need for additional employment lands for the long-term economic vitality of the community, ROPA 129 was approved. ROPA 129 redesignated 57 hectares of *Prime Agricultural Area* to *Living Area* and *Employment Area* in order to expand the Beaverton Urban Area and create additional employment lands. The net total of 1,619 hectares of prime agricultural land redesignated to a development designation through these ROPAs is captured in category 1 of **Table 1**.

Rural Designation: During the study period, there were two ROPAs which redesignated land from a prime agricultural designation to a rural designation. As part of ROPAs 128 and 129, 26

and 30 hectares respectively, of *Prime Agricultural Land* were redesignated to the *Major Open Space* designation in order to recognize natural heritage features. The predominant use of lands within the *Major Open Space Areas* is conservation, however, a range of agricultural, and non-agricultural uses are permitted. These land use changes are captured under category 2 of **Table 1**.

Site-Specific Amendments: Site-specific policy amendments were used in Durham Region on 2 occasions during the course of the study to allow additional uses within the *Permanent Agricultural Reserve* and the *Prime Agricultural Area*. These site-specific uses totaled 18 hectares and included an existing wood working shop, and a driving range. These amendments are captured in category 3 of **Table 1**.

TABLE 1 PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA CONVERTED THROUGH ROPAS IN DURHAM REGION BY ADOPTION DATE (2000-2014)

Year of Regional OPA adoption or approval by the OMB	Number of OPAs related to the conversion of prime agricultural area	CATEGORY 1 Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (ha)	CATEGORY 2 Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation (ha)	CATEGORY 3 Land designated as a prime agricultural area with additional site-specific permitted uses (ha)
2000	0	0	0	0
2001	0	0	0	0
2002	0	0	0	0
2003	1	0	0	1
2004	0	0	0	0
2005	0	0	0	0
2006	0	0	0	0
2007	0	0	0	0
2008	0	0	0	0
2009	3	57	30	17
2010	0	1,562**	26	0
2011	0	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0
2014	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	5	1,619	56	18

*In 2010, through OPA 128, a deferral was lifted on lands which were shown in Durham's 2004 Regional Official Plan as *Deferred Living Area*. The same amendment saw 48 hectares of land designated as *Living Area* returned to the *Prime Agricultural Area* designation. The net area of prime agricultural area converted to a development designation through ROPA 128 is listed for 2010. **Totals may not add due to rounding.

Provincial Land Use Plans: Within Durham Region, the Greenbelt Plan, including the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, covers 208,036 hectares or 82% of the Region's land area³. Prior to the adoption of the Greenbelt Plan, ROPA 91 permitted an additional site specific use on lands that eventually became part of the Greenbelt Plan area. After the Greenbelt Plan took effect

on December 16, 2004, two amendments in Durham Region were approved pertaining to the conversion of *Prime Agricultural Areas* within the Greenbelt Plan area. Planning studies pertaining to ROPA 129 commenced prior to adoption of the Greenbelt Plan and as such, the amendment was subject to previous land use policies. One further amendment was made after the adoption of the Greenbelt Plan to allow a site-specific driving range use in the Greenbelt Area; again, this application commenced in 2003, and was not subject to the policies of the Greenbelt Plan. The conversion of prime agricultural land, organized by ROPA application date and location relative to the borders of the Greenbelt Plan is captured in **Table 2**.

TABLE 2 PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA CONVERTED THROUGH ROPAS IN DURHAM REGION BY APPLICATION DATE AND LOCATION RELATIVE TO THE GREENBELT PLAN

	Outside the Greenbelt		Within the Greenbelt		Total
	Application date		Application Date		
	Pre 2005	2005-2014	Pre 2005	2005- 2014	
Prime agriculture area redesignated to a development or rural designation (ha)	0	1,588	87	0	1,675
Prime agricultural area with site-specific policies allowing additional uses (ha)	0	0	18	0	18
Total	0	1,588	105	0	1,693

*Table 1 includes files based on their approval date within the 2000-2014 study time frame. Table 2 is organized based on application date so that we can determine what policy regime the approved amendments was evaluated under, and may include files that were initiated prior to the 2000-2014 study time frame.

¹ Statistics Canada. 2012. Durham, Ontario (Code 3518). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.

² OMAFRA (adopted). 2012. Area of Census Farms (Acres) by County, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011. With data from Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture.

³ MMAH. 2005. “Greenbelt Outer Boundary” and MMAH, 2012. “Municipal Boundary - Upper Tier and District” data projected in UTM 17N.

⁴ Statistics Canada. 2014. Table 004-0233 - Census of Agriculture, farms classified by total gross farm receipts in the year prior to the census, CANSIM.