

Perth County

Total Land Area (Census2016)¹: 221,852 ha

Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 210,041 ha

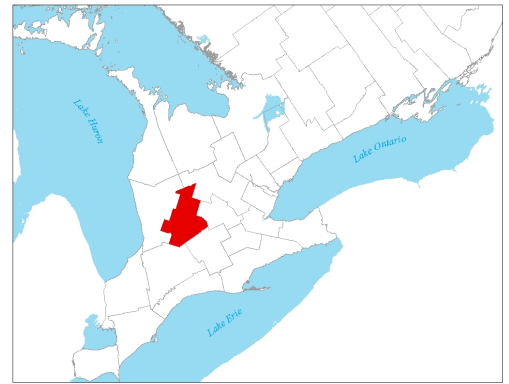
Area of County in the Greenbelt³: 0 ha

Percent of County in the Greenbelt: 0%

Gross Farm Receipts (2016⁴): \$966.5 million

Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm: \$4,601

Population (2016)¹: 76,796



Growth Rate 2006-2011⁵: 1.0 %

Growth Rate 2011-2016¹: 2.2%

Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (including urban, residential, and employment)	217 ha
Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation	0
Land designated as a prime agricultural area with a site-specific amendment to allow additional uses	413 ha

Purpose of the Summary

This county 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 Perth County. 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 Perth County's Official Plan and Official Plan Amendments (OPAs). For data collection in Perth County, the physical and electronic files, which document OPAs approved by the County and/or the Ontario Municipal Board during the years 2000 to 2014, were accessed at the Perth County Planning department offices in Stratford, Ontario. The assistance of staff at the Perth County's Planning and Department is 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 OP schedules are updated to align land use designations with more accurate parcel lines, or to reflect existing physical features that have been excluded from previous OP schedules.

Agricultural Land Use Designations in Perth County

Agricultural activity in Perth County is conducted under the *Agriculture* land use designation. The county’s Official Plan states that “90 percent of the County’s total land area is classified as having Class 1, 2 or 3 soil capability for Agriculture”⁶. There is no secondary or rural land use designation in Perth County. This study considered the conversion of land in the *Agriculture* designation and will refer to it as the prime agricultural area.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Development Designations: Over the course of the study period, there were a total of 15 OPAs that pertained to the redesignation of prime agricultural land to a development designation, totalling 217 hectares. Two of these OPAs redesignated prime agricultural land to a recreational land use. The other 13 OPAs permitted the expansion of settlement areas, hamlets or villages in the prime agricultural area. This type of farmland conversion, organized by OPA adoption date, is captured in category 1 of **Table 1**.

Rural Agriculture: Perth County does not use a rural land use designation to define areas outside the prime agricultural area but where agriculture remains the primary use. This type of amendment was not captured in Perth County.

Site-specific Amendments: Site-specific policy amendments were used on 37 occasions during the course of the study in Perth County to allow additional uses within the *Agriculture* designation. Site-specific policies were used to permit residential infilling, institutional and industrial land uses, and sales facilities. The majority of the site-specific policy amendments permitted home occupations or expanded on-farm diversified uses. A total of 412 hectares of prime agricultural land was converted through site-specific policy amendments, and are captured in category 3 of **Table 1**.

TABLE 1 PRIME AGRICULTURAL LAND CONVERSION THROUGH OPAs IN PERTH COUNTY BY ADOPTION DATE (2000-2014)

Year of County 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	2	0	0	59
2001	5	7	0	14
2002	3	0	0	43
2003	3	22	0	0

2004	3	0	0	10
2005	6	152	0	5
2006	5	1	0	40
2007	3	30	0	119
2008	3	1	0	2
2009	4	0	0	40
2010	2	0	0	2
2011	4	0	0	7
2012	4	0	0	68
2013	4	1	0	6
2014	1	3	0	0
Grand Total	54	217	0	415**

*Totals may not add due to rounding ** 413 hectares indicated above is not meant to be a measure of farmland conversion. This number tallies the area of land in the *Agriculture* designation granted permission for additional uses through site-specific policies, not necessarily the amount of land occupied by the additional uses. The vast majority of this land will remain in agricultural production.

Agricultural Land Gain: In Perth County, land was redesignated to the *Agriculture* designation on several occasions during the study period. OPA 41, approved in 2004, pertained to an MNR approved rehabilitation of a 34-hectare aggregate extraction site back to the agricultural designation. Further reconsideration of hamlet and settlement boundaries through three OPAs also resulted in 62 hectares of land being added to the agricultural designation; it is worth noting that these lands continued to be used for agricultural production while included in the settlement area. This study captured a total of 97 hectares of land added to the *Agriculture* designation in Perth County between 2000 and 2014.

Provincial Land Use Plans: Perth County does not fall into the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, nor the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Official Plan Amendments in Perth County are not subject to the policies of these provincial land use plans.

¹ Statistics Canada. 2017. *Perth, CTY [Census division], Ontario and Ontario [Province]* (table). *Census Profile*. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released May 3, 2017.

² OMAFRA (adopted). 2017. Area of Census Farms (Acres) by County, Ontario: 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016. 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. *Table 004-0233 – Census of Agriculture, farms classified by total gross farm receipts in the year prior to the census, every 5 years (number of farms reporting unless otherwise noted)*, CANSIM (database).

⁵ Statistics Canada. 2012. *Perth, Ontario (Code 3531) and Canada (Code 01) (table). Census Profile*. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.

⁶ County of Perth (2015 Consolidated). Official Plan.