

Waterloo Region

Total Land Area (Census 2016)¹: 136,892 Ha

Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 86,997.30 Ha

Area of Region in the Greenbelt³: 464 Ha

Percent of Region in the Greenbelt: 0.34%

Gross Farm Receipts (2016)⁴: \$563.63 million

Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm: \$6,478.69

Population (2016): 535,154

Growth Rate 2006-2011⁵: 6.1%

Growth Rate 2011-2016: 5.5%



Prime agricultural area redesignated to a development designation (including urban, residential, and employment)	1,019 ha
Prime agricultural area redesignated to a rural designation	0 ha
Land designated as a prime agricultural area with a site-specific amendment to allow additional uses	0 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 Waterloo. 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 Waterloo Regional Official Plan (ROP) and Regional Official Plan Amendments (ROPAs). In Waterloo Region, the files that document ROPAs approved by the Region and/or the Ontario Municipal Board during the years 2000 to 2014 were accessed at the Waterloo Region office in Kitchener, Ontario. The assistance of staff at Waterloo Region Planning, Development and Legislative Services 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 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 Waterloo Region

Waterloo Region designates agricultural lands under two categories in the overarching *Countryside* category. These designations include *Prime Agricultural Area* and *Rural Area*. The *Prime Agricultural Area* designation defines prime agricultural lands classified by high capability (Class 1, 2 and 3) soils and additional areas with locally concentrated agricultural operations. The *Rural Area* designation identifies non-prime agricultural areas where lower capability (Class 4-7) soils predominate. Prior to instituting the *Rural Area* designation, a *Non-Prime Agricultural Area* designation was used to capture lower-capability agricultural areas. For this study, only lands in the *Prime Agricultural Area* were considered to be of relevance and interest.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Development Designations: Over the course of the study period eight amendments in Waterloo Region converted prime agricultural land to a development designation. Each of these amendments provided for expansions to urban area designations within the region. These amendments are captured in category 1 of **Table 1**.

Rural Designation: In 2000, one amendment occurred in Waterloo Region that converted lands designated as a *Prime Agricultural Area* to a *Non-Prime Agricultural Area* designation to permit the development of a golf course. This was the only official plan amendment that occurred in the study period that reflected a change to a rural-type designation. However, this amendment was not included in the study conversion totals, as further inquiry proved that the lands were previously an aggregate operation consisting of largely non-prime soils, and the *Non-Prime Agricultural Area* designation better reflected the land capability for agriculture.

Site-Specific Amendments: No amendments were captured during the study period that used site-specific policies to permit additional uses on prime agricultural lands.

TABLE 1 PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA CONVERTED THROUGH ROPAS IN WATERLOO 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	1	8	0	0
2003	2	568	0	0
2004	2	290	0	0
2005	1	3	0	0
2006	0	0	0	0
2007	0	0	0	0
2008	0	0	0	0
2009	1	150	0	0
2010	0	0	0	0
2011	0	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0
2014	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	8	1,019	0	0

**Totals may not add due to rounding.

Provincial Land Use Plans: In Waterloo Region, only 464 hectares are covered by the Greenbelt Plan, equivalent to less than 0.5% of the total regional geography³.

TABLE 2 PRIME AGRICULTURAL AREA CONVERTED THROUGH OPAs IN WATERLOO 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)	847	172	0	0	1,019
Prime agricultural area with site-specific policies allowing additional uses (ha)	0	0	0	0	0
Total	847	172	0	0	1,019

*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 were evaluated under, and may include files that were initiated prior to the 2000-2014 study time frame.

¹ Statistics Canada. 2017. *Waterloo, RM [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. *Waterloo, Ontario (Code 3530) and Canada (Code 01)* (table). *Census Profile*. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-WXE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.