

OXFORD COUNTY



Total Land Area (Census 2016)¹: 203,961 ha
Area of Census Farms (2001)²: 180,270 ha
Area of Census Farms (2016)²: 179,737 ha
Gross Farm Receipts (2016)³: 910,779,360
Gross Farm Receipts per Hectare of Census Farm: \$5,067.30
Population (2016)¹: 110,862
Growth Rate 2006–2011⁴: 2.9%
Growth Rate 2011–2016¹: 4.9%

Prime Agricultural Area Redesignated To A Development Designation (Including Urban, Residential, And Employment) 2000–2017	841.68 ha
Prime Agricultural Area Redesignated To A Rural Designation 2000–2017	0 ha
Land Designated As A Prime Agricultural Area With A Site-Specific Amendment To Allow Additional Uses 2000–2017	27.39 ha
Total Amount of Prime Agricultural Land Loss 2000–2017	869.07 ha
Total Prime Agricultural Land Loss as a Percentage (Per Census Farm Area 2001)	0.48%

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 17-year study period from 2000–2017. This summary is meant to provide detail of the findings for Oxford 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 Loss* research project.

Methods in Brief

The study involved the examination of Official Plan Amendments (OPAs) approved by Oxford County the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and/or the Ontario Municipal Board for Oxford County during the years 2000–2017. The first Official Plan (OP) for Oxford County and its eight lower-tier municipalities was approved in 1979. The lower-tier municipalities within Oxford County are Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra Tavistock, Norwich South-West Oxford, Zorra, Woodstock Tillsonburg, and

Ingersoll. The files which document the County's OPAs were compiled by Oxford County's planning staff. Their assistance 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. Housekeeping amendments that were not applicable to this study include OPAs that facilitate aggregate operations on agricultural land.

Agricultural Land Use Designations in Oxford County

Prime agricultural lands are captured under the *Agricultural Reserve* designation in Oxford County. The intent of the Agricultural Reserve designation is to protect broad areas of high capability soils, recognizing that individual parcels within these areas may in fact contain pockets of Class 4–7 soils. That being said, approximately 91 percent of agricultural land in the County is considered to be Class 1–3 according to the Canadian Land Inventory, and 89 percent of Oxford's total land base is devoted to agricultural production.

Trends in Agricultural Land Conversion

Development Designations: This research captured twelve amendments that converted agricultural reserves to another designation, primarily Open Space, Residential Settlement, and Traditional Industrial. The largest redesignation was through OPA 113, which redesignated 340 hectares of land from *Agricultural Reserve* to a *Traditional Industrial* designation as a part of East Woodstock's Secondary Plan and Design Study. This OPA impacted land surrounding the existing Toyota industrial facility. Another notable redesignation was through OPA 99, which permitted the redesignation of 405 hectares designated *Future Urban Growth*, *Agricultural Reserve*, and *Open Space* to facilitate the long-term use of the lands for a motor vehicle manufacturing and assembling facility. While there was no stated hectareage within the OPA specific to the agricultural land in question, the parcel was measured using the maps provided and estimated to be 241 ha. Not captured in this study but notable was two OPAs that converted land back into the Agricultural Reserve designation, including OPA 135 and OP 14-07-1 which together impacted approximately 23 hectares of land. These OPAs were captured under category 1 of Table 1.

Rural Designation: As all lands outside of designated settlement areas in Oxford County are considered to be prime agricultural lands, the County does not have a rural land use designation to define. Zero OPAs were captured under category 2 of Table 1.

Site-Specific Amendments: Four site-specific policies were used to permit additional uses on lands designated agricultural. Three of these amendments impacted small parcels of land to establish a dairy production facility, a solar farm, and a schoolhouse. OPA 40 placed a site-specific policy on of prime agricultural land in order to permit a 9-hole golf course. The agricultural assessment for this OPA identified that 89 percent of the total 28.3 hectares redesignated are considered to be Class 1 and 2 soils with the remaining 11 percent being organic soils. Organic soils and are not classified with the Canadian Land Inventory rating system ad may be treated differently than prime agricultural soils, particularly if covered by natural heritage features. Therefore the organic soils impacted in this OPA have been removed from the total land loss. The remaining 25.19 hectares have been captured along with the other site-specific amendments under category 3 of Table 1.

Table 1. Prime Agricultural Area Converted Through OPAs In Oxford County By Adoption Date (2000-2017)

Year of 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	1	0	0	25.19
2001	0	0	0	0
2002	0	0	0	0
2003	1	2.63	0	0
2004	0	0	0	0
2005	3	244.2	0	0.4
2006	0	0	0	0
2007	0	0	0	0
2008	4	375	0	1
2009	3	139.85	0	0
2010	1	31	0	0
2011	1	15	0	0
2012	0	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0
2014	1	34	0	0
2015	0	0	0	0
2016	0	0	0	0
2017	1	0	0	0.8

Grand Total	16	841.68	0	27.39
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**Totals may not add due to rounding.

Provincial Land Use Plans:

Oxford County's Official Plan is subject to the Provincial Policy Statement, however Oxford County does not fall under the Greenbelt Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, or the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

1. Statistics Canada. 2017. *Oxford, CTY [Census division], Ontario and Ontario [Province] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed September 3, 2020)

2. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (2017) Area of Census Farms (Acres) by County, Ontario: 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016, Updated October 24, 2017.

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/stats/census/cty30a.htm>

3. Statistics Canada. Table 32-10-0436-01 Farms classified by total gross farm receipts in the year prior to the census. Modified September 3, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.25318/3210043601-eng>

4. Statistics Canada. 2012. *Oxford, Ontario (Code 3532) and Ontario (Code 35) (table). Census Profile. 2011 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012.

<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed September 3, 2020).