



**Stratford City Council
Special Council Open Session
AGENDA**

Date: Thursday, December 7, 2023

Time: 6:00 P.M.

Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Council Present: Mayor Ritsma - Chair Presiding, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Biehn, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Henderson, Councillor Hunter, Councillor McCabe, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Wordofa

Staff Present: Joan Thomson - Chief Administrative Officer, Tatiana Dafoe - City Clerk, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Taylor Crinklaw - Director of Infrastructure Services, Karmen Krueger - Director of Corporate Services, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Adam Betteridge - Director of Building and Planning Services, Chris Bantock - Deputy Clerk, Neil Anderson - Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Danielle Clayton - Recording Secretary

To watch the Special Council and Public Meeting live, please click the following link:

<https://video.isilive.ca/stratford/live.html>

A video recording of the meeting will also be available through a link on the City's website

<https://calendar.stratford.ca/meetings> following the meeting.

Pages

1. Call to Order:

Mayor Ritsma, Chair presiding, to call the Council meeting to order.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof:

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence

from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and to otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature Thereof

3. Report of the Director of Building and Planning Services:

3.1 Resolution - City of Stratford Official Plan Five-Year Comprehensive Review (COU23-135)

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Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the "Background Review Report" and associated presentation by WSP Canada Inc. for the City of Stratford Official Plan Review be received together with the accompanying "Phase 1 Background Report" of Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.;

THAT Staff be directed to proceed with the Section 26 Official Plan Review as outlined in the WSP "Background Review Report" and this report entitled "Special and Public Meeting - City of Stratford Official Plan Five-Year Comprehensive Review";

AND THAT Council hears all interested parties with respect to the Official Plan Five-Year Comprehensive Review.

4. Adjournment to a Public Meeting under the Planning Act:

Motion by _____

THAT the Special Council Meeting adjourn to a Public Meeting pursuant to subsection 26(3) of the Planning Act, to hear from members of the public on what revisions may be required as part of a proposed update to the City's Official Plan and to reconvene following the Public Meeting.

5. Reading of the By-laws:

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The following By-law requires First and Second Readings and Third and Final Readings:

5.1 Confirmatory By-law

To confirm the proceedings of Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford at its meeting held on December 7, 2023.

6. Adjournment:

Motion by _____

THAT the December 7, 2023 Special Council Meeting adjourn.



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: December 7, 2023
To: Mayor and Council
From: Adam Betteridge, Director of Building and Planning Services
Report Number: COU23-136
Attachments: 1. "Background Review Report" dated October 2023, WSP Canada Inc.; and
 2. "Phase 1 Background Report" dated October 19, 2023, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

Title: Special and Public Meeting – City of Stratford Official Plan Five-Year Comprehensive Review

Objective: To initiate a five-year review of an Official Plan, the Planning Act requires that a special meeting of Council, open to the public, be held to discuss revisions that may be required to the Official Plan. This report, along with the Consultant's report and presentation, accompanies the Special Meeting for the purposes of initiating the five-year review.

This Special Meeting will allow Council, Staff, and the City's Consultants to obtain preliminary feedback from the public and interested stakeholders on land use matters to be considered during the Official Plan Review process.

Background: The Official Plan functions as a legal document that guides growth and development in the City. The City's existing Official Plan was adopted by Council in 1993 and was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in 1994. It was comprehensively updated through Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 21 in 2015, which was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in 2016. The current Official Plan contains goals, objectives and policies that provide direction on growth and development in the City to the year 2033.

At its Regular Meeting of June 28, 2021, Council considered Report No. PLA21-010 and directed Staff to proceed with initiating the Five-Year Review of the Official Plan.

At its Regular Meeting of May 9, 2022, Council considered Report No. PLA22-012 entitled "Five Year Review of the City of Stratford Official Plan, Draft Workplan and

Public Consultation Framework”, and directed Staff to move forward with the Official Plan Review and issue a Request for Proposal (“RFP”) for consulting services.

The RFP process was conducted in early 2023, with three firms submitting proposals. A committee consisting of three Members of Council and two staff representatives reviewed and evaluated the submissions received. At its Regular Meeting of April 11, 2023, Council considered Report No. COU23-048 and selected WSP Canada Inc. (“WSP”) to assist the City with the review.

Analysis: The Planning Act (Sec. 26) requires the City to update its Official Plan at least every five years. The City completed its most recent review of the Official Plan in 2015. The Official Plan Review provides an opportunity to confirm the community’s vision for the future and respond to recent and emerging changes in Stratford.

The purpose of the Official Plan Review is to update the policies of the Official Plan to conform to Provincial planning policies and legislation. As part of the Official Plan Review, a Land Needs Assessment will be completed to ensure that the City is planning for future population, job, and housing growth. The Official Plan Review process will develop forward-thinking policies to guide land use, growth, and development over the next 25 years.

More information, including how public consultation is proposed, is provided in the attached “Background Review Report” prepared by WSP. A presentation by WSP will occur at the Special and Public Meeting.

Notice of the Special and Public Meeting was issued in accordance with the Planning Act. As of the date of writing this report, the following comments have been submitted:

- Bell Canada: no specific comments or concerns at this time; asked to be circulated on any future materials and/or decisions related to this matter.
- CN Rail: provided detailed comments with the following (summarized) requests:
 - That the Official Plan acknowledges the importance of the rail infrastructure;
 - Include a definition for Major Facilities, Major Goods Movement Facilities and Corridors, Rail Facilities and Sensitive Land Uses;
 - Add rail facilities and influence areas to a schedule;
 - Policy direction should clarify that new developments would be required to meet the Provincial Policy Statement requirements for the long-term protection of Rail Facilities; and,
 - Policy direction should clarify that new developments would be required to meet the Provincial Policy Statement requirements for land use compatibility with respect to major facilities.
- Mike Sullivan, Resident, Stratford:
 - Interest in the Land Needs Assessment that will be conducted as part of the review process, this given there was a large annexation from Perth

South. Expressed that the large annexation was neither necessary or done in an open and transparent manner.

- City method of public notice and engagement (City website/social media and two Town Crier postings in the Beacon Herald) is not wide enough for this important process: "Something as important as deciding what the official plan will be for the next 5 years deserves more publicity than that";
- Secondary Plans (two) need to be revisited due to how old they are (25-30 years): "With the need for affordable housing and the need to reduce car dependency, both these Secondary Plans need to be revisited."

The Director can provide the following responses to the above: For Bell Canada and CN Rail, their comments are standard, agency-focused comments that will be reviewed and addressed as part of the review process. For Mr. Sullivan's comments, the Director has already responded directly to Mr. Sullivan advising that: a draft "Land Needs Assessment" is expected in early 2024; the Director recognizes Mr. Sullivan's suggestion for broader outreach, however the City notices align with the prescribed guidelines, and follows the notification procedures as required by the province's Planning Act. The City remains dedicated to maximizing community awareness within our existing framework and appreciates Mr. Sullivan's continued engagement in this process; and, the Secondary Plans are to be addressed as part of the Official Plan Review.

Ensuring that the Official Plan is current and meeting the needs of the City is imperative: the Official Plan sets targets for growth and development that are tied to growth-related infrastructure planning and financing.

A fiscal analysis of growth scenarios will be completed as part of the City's growth plan conformity work as part of the process.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

The Official Plan Review includes costs associated with consultant services and community engagement and was initially included in the 2023 approved budget at an estimated cost of \$150,000. The funding of the Official Plan is 90% from growth studies in development charges, and 10% from internal sources. Financial impacts in 2023 are nominal.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

The Official Plan Review will carry into 2024, and is expected to be completed in the first quarter ("Q1") of 2025. Accordingly, unspent planned expenditures and the available funding from the initial \$150,000 have been included in the 2024 draft budget. Based on new information and pricing, the estimate has been increased to \$205,000, with \$184,000 coming from the development charges, and the remaining shortfall of \$21,000 from the tax levy in 2024.

Link to asset management plan and strategy:

There are no direct linkages to the City's asset management plan and strategy based from the recommendations and/or information provided in this Report, however, having an updated Official Plan that aligns with the City's asset management plan and strategy, and vice versa, ensures that future growth and development is consistent with the efficient utilization and maintenance of municipal assets, optimizing their long-term sustainability and functionality.

Legal considerations:

There are no direct legal considerations that pertain to the recommendations and information provided in this Report.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Mobility, Accessibility and Design Excellence

Improving ways to get around, to and from Stratford by public transit, active transportation and private vehicle.

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

Developing our Resources

Optimizing Stratford's physical assets and digital resources. Planning a sustainable future for Stratford's resources and environment.

Widening our Economic Opportunities

Strengthening Stratford's economy by developing, attracting and retaining a diversity of businesses and talent.

Alignment with One Planet Principle:

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Land and Nature

Protecting and restoring land for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Sustainable Water

Using water efficiently, protecting local water resources and reducing flooding and drought.

Local and Sustainable Food

Promoting sustainable humane farming and healthy diets high in local, seasonal organic food and vegetable protein.

Travel and Transport

Reducing the need to travel, encouraging walking, cycling and low carbon transport.

Zero Carbon Energy

Making buildings and manufacturing energy efficient and supplying all energy with renewables.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the "Background Review Report" and associated presentation by WSP Canada Inc. for the City of Stratford Official Plan Review be received together with the accompanying "Phase 1 Background Report" of Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.;

THAT Staff be directed to proceed with the Section 26 Official Plan Review as outlined in the WSP "Background Review Report" and this report entitled "Special and Public Meeting - City of Stratford Official Plan Five-Year Comprehensive Review";

AND THAT Council hears all interested parties with respect to the Official Plan Five-Year Comprehensive Review.

Prepared by: Adam Betteridge, MPA, MCIP, RPP, Director of Building and Planning Services

Recommended by: Adam Betteridge, MPA, MCIP, RPP, Director of Building and Planning Services
Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer



Official Plan Review Phase 1 Background Report

City of Stratford

November 30, 2023

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.
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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Full Description of Acronym
C.D.	Census Division
CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
G.I.S.	Geographic information systems
G.T.H.A.	Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area
L.Q.	Location Quotients
O.P.	Official Plan
P.P.S., 2020	Provincial Policy Statement, 2020
P.P.S., 2023	Provincial Planning Statement, 2023
P.P.U.	Persons per unit
sq.ft.	square foot/feet
sq.m	square metre/metres



Executive Summary

As part of the five-year review and update of the City of Stratford's Official Plan (O.P.), Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson) has prepared a background review report, titled "How have we grown?", as part of Phase 1 of the study. This report examines recent growth and development trends within the context of broader regional growth trends and the local level planning policy framework. The review also assesses Stratford's potential to accommodate future growth through intensification and greenfield supply opportunities.

Recent Growth Trends

The City of Stratford has experienced strong population growth and demand for housing over the past five years. Stratford's population base increased from 31,600 in 2006 to 34,200 in 2021, reflecting average annual growth rates of 0.1% over the 2006 to 2011 period, 0.4% over the 2011 to 2016 period, and 1.1% over the 2016 to 2021 period. Stratford's average annual population growth rates significantly increased over the 15-year period.

A range of demographic and economic factors is driving this shift, including growth in local employment opportunities, net migration, an aging population and affordability considerations.

Stratford's Housing Market and Development Trends

Stratford's 2021 housing base totalled approximately 14,740 occupied dwelling units largely consisting of low-density housing (single detached/semi-detached) which accounted for 64% of total units.^[1] Stratford's housing base comprised approximately 11% and 26% medium- and high-density units, respectively. Stratford had a higher share of renter households than the provincial average, with 34% of housing units renter-occupied.^[2]

Over the 2013 to 2022 period, housing growth in Stratford averaged 167 residential units constructed per year. Housing growth has accelerated in the past five years, with an average of 185 units per year over the 2018 to 2022 period. Over the past decade,

^[1] Based on Statistics Canada. 2021.

^[2] Based on 2021 Census Profile data.



low-density housing construction has declined as a share of total housing development, with an increase in the share of high-density units (i.e., apartments and other multi-unit dwellings) including purpose-built rental dwellings.

The City of Stratford has currently achieved an overall average of 37 units per net hectare in recently developed residential areas (i.e., areas developed since 2012). The average density is impacted by the size of the lots, housing mix and the development form. In the City's newly developing neighbourhoods, average densities vary, ranging from 17 units per net hectare on large, expansive, single detached house lots to over 100 units per net hectare on apartment lots.

Stratford's Non-Residential Areas

Stratford has a diverse employment base comprising a range of industrial, commercial, and institutional sectors. The City's employment base is primarily accommodated on two types of designated lands – Employment Areas and Commercial Areas (including the Downtown Core).

Employment Areas are an integral part of Stratford's economic development potential and accommodate a significant share of the City's businesses and employment. Employment Areas accommodate primarily export-based employment, including a wide range of industrial uses (e.g., manufacturing, distribution/logistics, transportation services), as well as specific commercial and institutional uses (e.g., office, service, ancillary/accessory retail) which generally support the industrial/business function of the industrial area. In contrast to other urban land uses (e.g., commercial and mixed-use areas), employment lands provide the opportunity to accommodate export-based employment sectors that cannot be easily accommodated in other areas of the municipality. Stratford has a strong and successful history of municipal employment land development. The City continues to be a key employment land developer in the municipality, assembling and servicing land. The municipality is responsible for subdivision design, infrastructure development, and land sales.

Stratford's commercial base is also an integral part of the community, supporting jobs, as well as providing residents access to goods and services which enhances the overall quality of life for residents. Stratford has approximately 187,000 sq.m (approximately 2 million sq.ft.) of purpose-built retail and accommodation space on designated commercial lands (Commercial Area and Downtown Core). On a per capita basis,



Stratford has approximately 5.3 sq.m (57 sq.ft.) of retail space per resident. Relative to the population base, the size of the retail base in Stratford is considered high. The high per capita level of retail is largely a result of supporting a vibrant tourism market, as well as supporting a trade area that extends beyond the City of Stratford.

Stratford's Non-Residential Market and Development Trends

Over the 2013 to 2022 period, Stratford averaged 15,990 sq.m (172,100 sq.ft.) of non-residential development activity annually. Over the past decade (2013 to 2022), industrial development accounted for approximately 73% of development activity compared to 22% and 4% in the commercial and institutional sectors.

The robust industrial development activity in Stratford has primarily occurred on Employment Areas lands where land absorption has averaged approximately 6 hectares (14 acres) per year. Lands absorbed on Employment Areas have largely comprised manufacturing, construction services, warehousing and utilities uses. Due to the land extensive requirements of these industries, employment densities have averaged 15 jobs per net hectare (6 jobs per net acre) over the past five years.^[1]

Over the 2018 to 2022 period, Stratford has added approximately 1,710 sq.m or 18,400 sq.ft. of commercial building floorspace annually.^[2] Based on the City's population growth over this period, Stratford's commercial floorspace is growing at a slightly lower pace (0.9% annually) than the growth rate of the City's population base (1.1% annually). This is generally consistent with trends experienced in other smaller markets in Ontario.

Opportunities to Accommodate Growth in Stratford

City staff provided the Consultant Team with an inventory of vacant residential and non-residential lands. With respect to the City's designated urban residential areas, future residential development opportunities are summarized by active development applications, vacant designated greenfield areas and intensification opportunities. Consideration has also been given to the City's ability to accommodate future non-residential growth on designated commercial and employment lands, as well as through non-residential intensification.

^[1] Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. survey data, 2023.

^[2] Based on City of Stratford Non-Residential Building Permit Activity.



Stratford has approximately 4,190 housing units in the development approvals process (registered unbuilt, draft approved and under review) across the City. This includes 2,195 units in registered plans of subdivision, 850 units in draft approved plans and 1,145 units in draft plans under review. Of the total housing units in development approvals, 665 units (16%) are low density, 945 units (23%) are medium density, and 2,580 units (62%) are high density.

As part of the residential intensification analysis, the Consultant Team has reviewed and updated the redevelopment site inventory prepared as part of the City's 2012 Residential Intensification Assessment. Infill lots were also considered and include vacant designated residential lands within the built boundary that are not in the development approvals process. Mapping data, aerial photography, and other existing information sources were used to develop this inventory. It is estimated that 183 housing units could be accommodated on infill lots, including 37 low-density, 30 medium-density and 116 high-density units. Redevelopment opportunities were assessed based on a low- and high-range scenario. Under the low-range scenario, the updated analysis identified a total supply of 805 housing units, while under the high-range scenario, the supply potential totals 1,055 housing units.

It is estimated that the City has a gross land area (less environmental take-outs) of 58 hectares (143 acres) of vacant greenfield residential lands with no applications. A net to gross ratio of 55% was applied to determine the net developable land area of 32 net hectares (79 acres). A more detailed assessment of the housing potential on vacant greenfield lands in Stratford will be prepared in Phase 2 and will include a total estimate of housing unit supply potential on vacant lands once an appropriate density assumption is established.

Based on a review of the Employment Area vacant land supply, Stratford is estimated to have a net developable land area estimated at 199 net hectares (492 net acres). It is estimated that approximately 5% of the vacant designated employment land (10 net hectares or 25 net acres) is owned by the City. The remaining 189 net hectares (467 net acres) are privately owned lands located throughout Stratford. Of Stratford's shovel-ready employment lands totalling 54 net hectares (133 net acres), 10 net hectares (25 net acres) are City owned, accounting for 19% of the total.

It is anticipated that a share of future employment growth within Stratford may be accommodated within existing developed Employment Areas. Intensification can take



several forms, including development of underutilized lots (infill), expansion (horizontal or vertical) of existing buildings, and redevelopment of sites. Through a high-level desktop review using the developed employment land parcel inventory, building footprints, and orthophoto overlays, 82 hectares (203 acres) of Stratford's developed employment lands were identified as underutilized. The underutilized parcels account for 19% of the total developed employment land base in Stratford.

With respect to the supply of Stratford's vacant commercial areas designated commercial/mixed-use lands (lands designated in the City of Stratford O.P. as "Commercial Area;" "Downtown Core;" and "Gateway Mixed-Use Area"), the City of Stratford has a very minimal supply, totalling only 4 hectares (10 acres). Furthermore, while the City has 20 vacant commercial/mixed-uses sites, the vast majority of the sites measure less than 1 hectare, which limits the opportunities for a range of commercial uses.



1. Introduction

1.1 Terms of Reference

As part of the five-year review and update of the City of Stratford's Official Plan (O.P.), Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson) has prepared a background review report, titled "How have we grown?", as part of Phase 1 of the study. This report examines recent growth and development trends within the context of broader regional growth trends and the local level planning policy framework. The review also assesses Stratford's potential to accommodate future growth through intensification and greenfield supply opportunities. This will then lead to a more in-depth analysis of forecast growth trends and drivers and corresponding urban land needs, which will be examined in Phase 2 of the study.

1.2 Context

The City of Stratford is located in southwestern Ontario, 40 km west of Kitchener and 50 km northeast of the City of London, and approximately 150 km southwest of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (G.T.H.A.). The City is a single-tier municipality situated within the Perth County Census Division.

Stratford has experienced strong population growth and demand for housing across the housing spectrum over the 2016 to 2021 period.^[1] A range of demographic and economic factors is driving this shift, including growth in local employment opportunities, an aging population, and affordability considerations.

Over the coming decades, Stratford is anticipated to experience continued population and employment growth. There are numerous economic benefits associated with population and employment growth related to economic expansion, community vibrancy, and an increasing tax base. On the other hand, new developments can also create new challenges associated with infrastructure requirements, municipal service delivery, housing needs, and environmental protection.

^[1] Based on Statistics Canada 2016-2021 Census data, Stratford's population increased by approximately 6%.



1.3 Planning Context

This chapter summarizes the key provincial policy directions relevant to growth management in Stratford. It describes the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (P.P.S., 2020) and their applicability to the O.P. review. It also describes the policies of the proposed Provincial Planning Statement released in April 2023 (P.P.S., 2023) and how it may affect future planning matters.

Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

The P.P.S., 2020 came into effect on May 1, 2020.^[1] Its purpose was to update the P.P.S., 2014 so that it worked together with changes to the provincial land use planning system that occurred around the same time. This included changes to the *Planning Act* through Bill 108, the *More Homes, More Choice Act* (2019) and the on-going updates to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (the Growth Plan). Additional reasons for the update largely related to the need to increase urban housing supply, support the economy and job creation, and to reduce barriers and costs to the land use planning system to provide greater predictability.

A significant change of the P.P.S., 2020 with regard to housing policy is the provision of a housing options approach to address an appropriate range and mix of housing, and to specifically meet market-based needs of current and future residents (policy 1.4.3). Providing housing options adds broader considerations like ownership structures and housing program planning to built-form considerations. Housing options are defined as:

“A range of housing types such as, but not limited to single detached, semi-detached, rowhouses, townhouses, stacked townhouses, multiplexes, additional residential units, tiny homes, multi-residential buildings and uses such as, but not limited to life lease housing, co-ownership housing, co-operative housing, community land trusts, affordable housing, housing for people with special needs, and housing related to employment, institutional or educational uses.”

Throughout the P.P.S., 2020 there is strong encouragement to consider the housing market when addressing planning matters such as managing growth overall, identifying market-ready sites to improve economic development and competitiveness, and providing for a range and mix of housing options. Although this may assist with

^[1] Provincial Policy Statement, 2020. Under the *Planning Act*. Ontario.



managing growth and development in a way that may more accurately reflect market realities, it could make it more challenging for municipalities to transition to other types of development forms with which they have not historically had considerable success in implementing. As such, while housing market demand is important when considering long-range, land use planning and housing objectives, this demand must be broadly considered within the context of broad provincial interests, namely: ensuring the efficient use of land, resources, and infrastructure; providing a clean and healthy environment for current and future generations; providing for affordable housing; diversifying the economic base; and supporting job creation.

Bill 23: *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*

On October 25, 2022, the Ontario government introduced the *More Homes Built Faster Act* (Bill 23). Following Bill 108 and Bill 109, Bill 23 is part of a long-term strategy to address the housing crisis by facilitating the construction of 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. Bill 23 received Royal Assent by the provincial legislature on November 28, 2022. The Bill is intended to increase the housing supply and provide a mix of ownership and rental housing types for Ontarians. This identified need for additional housing relates to demand associated with both existing Ontario residents and newcomers to the Province through immigration.

To support the provincial commitment to getting 1.5 million homes built over the next 10 years, Bill 23 includes sweeping and substantive changes to a range of legislation, as well as through updates to regulations and consultations on various provincial plans and policies. Bill 23 exempts residential development with up to 10 residential units from site plan control approval. Furthermore, for developments that are subject to site plan control, Bill 23 limits the extent to which exterior design could be addressed through the site plan approval process. To encourage gentle intensification, Bill 23 also allows for up to three residential units to be developed on any serviced lot that is designated for residential uses.

1.3.1 *Proposed Provincial Planning Statement, 2023*

On April 6, 2023, the Province of Ontario released a new P.P.S. in concert with introducing Bill 97: *Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023*. Bill 97 proposes amendments to seven provincial statutes, including the *Planning Act*. Bill 97 was introduced on April 6, 2023, and received Royal Assent on June 8, 2023. The



proposed P.P.S., 2023 (anticipated to receive a decision by the Province in the fall of 2023) is intended to simplify and integrate existing provincial policies (the Growth Plan and the P.P.S., 2020) while providing municipalities and the Province with greater flexibility to deliver on housing objectives. A key focus of the proposed P.P.S., 2023 is that it recognizes that the approach for achieving housing outcomes will vary by municipality and, as such, it moves away from a prescriptive guideline approach.

According to the proposed P.P.S., 2023, at the time of each O.P update, sufficient land shall be made available to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs for a time horizon of at least 25 years. The previous P.P.S. required that municipalities accommodate projected needs up to 25 years.

Generally unchanged from the P.P.S, 2020, the proposed P.P.S., 2023 still requires planning authorities to maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years through lands which are designated and available for residential development. It is noted, however, that the emphasis on intensification and redevelopment in this regard has been removed. Planning authorities are also required to maintain at all times, where new development is to occur, land with servicing capacity sufficient to provide at least a three-year supply of residential units, available through lands suitably zoned, including units in draft approved or registered plans.

Another key change in the proposed P.P.S., 2023 is that planning authorities are allowed to extend their growth forecasts and land needs assessments for infrastructure, public service facilities, Employment Areas and Strategic Growth Areas beyond a 25-year time frame. The P.P.S., 2020 allows for the planning of the long-term protection of Employment Areas beyond a 25-year horizon; however, it does not allow for the designation of Employment Areas beyond a 25-year horizon.

The achievement of complete and competitive communities is an important concept to consider with respect to the balance between residential and non-residential growth across the City over the long term. In accordance with the proposed P.P.S., 2023, complete and competitive communities include an appropriate mix of jobs and a full range of housing. Accordingly, the long-term growth vision for Stratford should be considered within the context of complete and competitive communities. Attempting to accelerate population growth too aggressively within the City, without consideration of how such population growth would be balanced by an appropriate mix of jobs (including export-based/industrial jobs in addition to community-supportive employment) would



potentially undermine the proposed P.P.S., 2023 policies related to complete and competitive communities.

The proposed P.P.S., 2023, if approved, is anticipated to come into effect in the fall of 2023.^[1]

2. Stratford Population and Demographic Trends

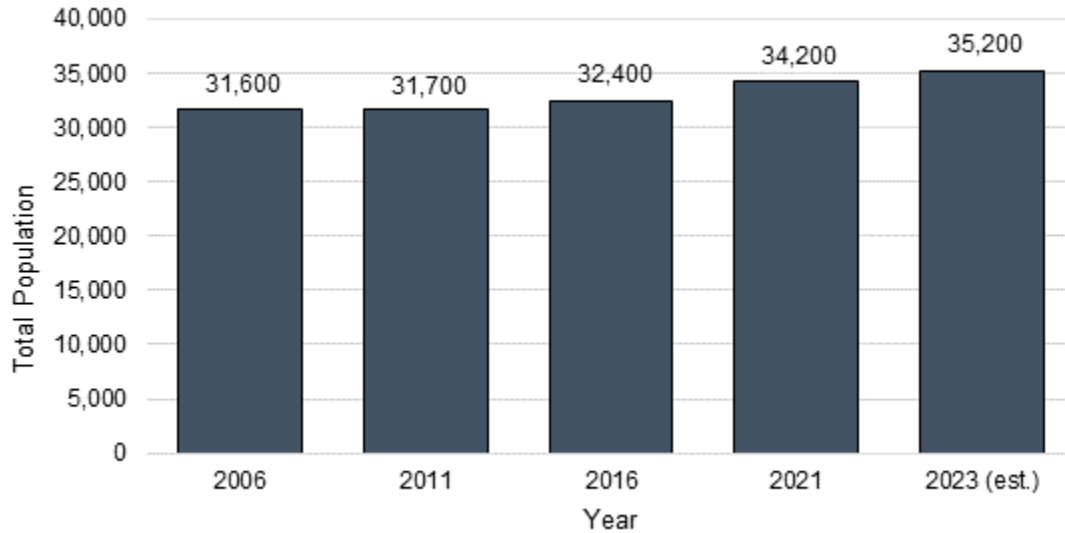
2.1 Population Trends

Figure 1 and Figure 2 summarize the historical population growth rates for the City of Stratford during the 2006 to 2021 period. For comparative purposes, historical population growth rates have also been provided for Perth County and the Province of Ontario. As illustrated, Stratford's population base increased from 31,600 in 2006 to 34,200 in 2021, reflecting average annual growth rates of 0.1% over the 2006 to 2011 period, 0.4% over the 2011 to 2016 period, and 1.1% over the 2016 to 2021 period. Stratford's average annual population growth rates significantly increased over the 15-year period. With a growth rate of 1.1% between 2016 and 2021, the City of Stratford grew slightly slower than the provincial and County averages. As of 2023, the population of Stratford is estimated to be 35,200, an increase of approximately 1,000 from 2021.

^[1] Proposed Approach to Implementation of the proposed Provincial Planning Statement, April 6, 2023.



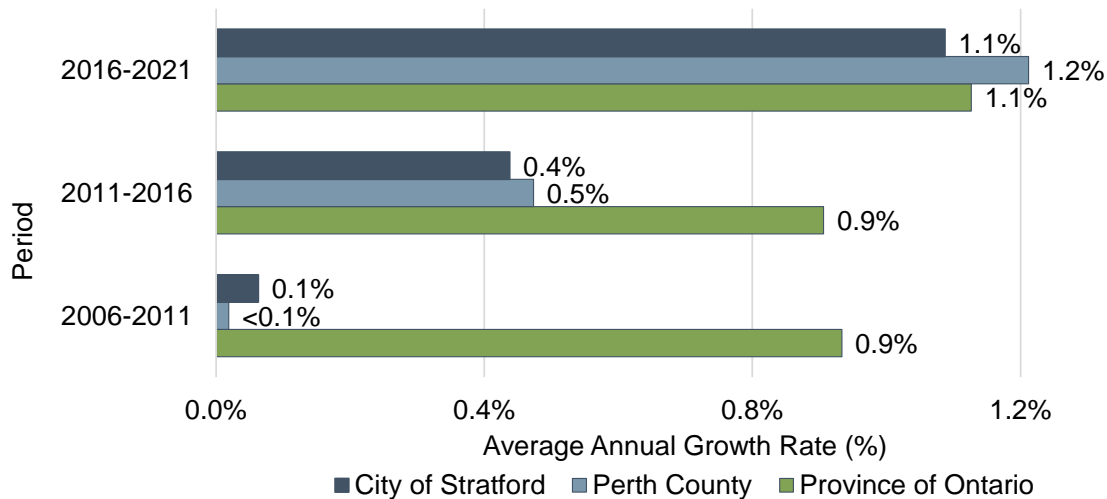
Figure 1
City of Stratford
Historical Population, 2006 to 2023



Note: Population includes a net Census undercount estimated at approximately 2.8%. Population figures have been rounded.

Source: 2006 to 2021 derived from Statistics Canada Census data, 2023 estimated by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

Figure 2
City of Stratford, Perth County and Province of Ontario
Average Annual Population Growth Rate, 2006 to 2021



Note: Population figures include net Census undercount.

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Census data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



2.2 Demographic Trends

Demographic trends strongly influence both housing need and form. Across Ontario, the population is getting older on average, due to the aging of the Baby Boomers.^[1] The first wave of this demographic group turned 75 years of age in 2021.

Similar to the Province, the average age of the population base in Stratford is also aging, due to the large concentration of Baby Boomers. The aging of the local population base further reinforces the need to attract younger age groups to the City, particularly those characterized as Millennials and Generation Z, as well as other future generations.^[2]

Figure 3 summarizes historical trends in population structure over the 2001 to 2021 period by major age group in Stratford. Key observations include:

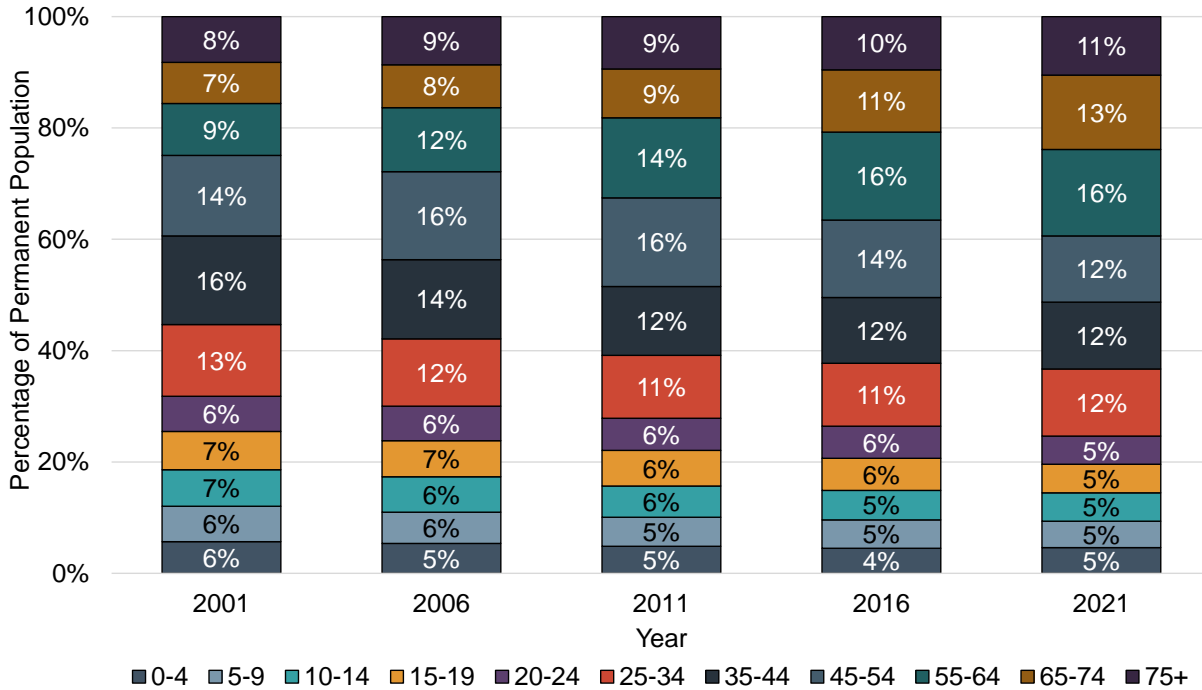
- The share of population in the 55+ age cohort steadily increased from 25% in 2001 to 39% in 2021;
- In contrast to the 55+ population age group, the population share of the 0 to 19 age group declined from 25% in 2001 to 20% in 2021;
- Similarly, the share of the 35 to 54 age group steadily declined from 30% in 2001 to 24% in 2021; and
- Lastly, the population share of the young adult age group (20 to 34) declined from 19% to 17%.

^[1] Baby Boomers are generally defined as people born between 1946 and 1964.

^[2] Millennials are generally defined as those born between 1980 and 1992. For the purposes of this study, we have assumed that those born between 1993 and 2005 comprise Generation Z.



Figure 3
City of Stratford
Historical Permanent Population by Major Age Group, 2001 to 2021



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Custom Order data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

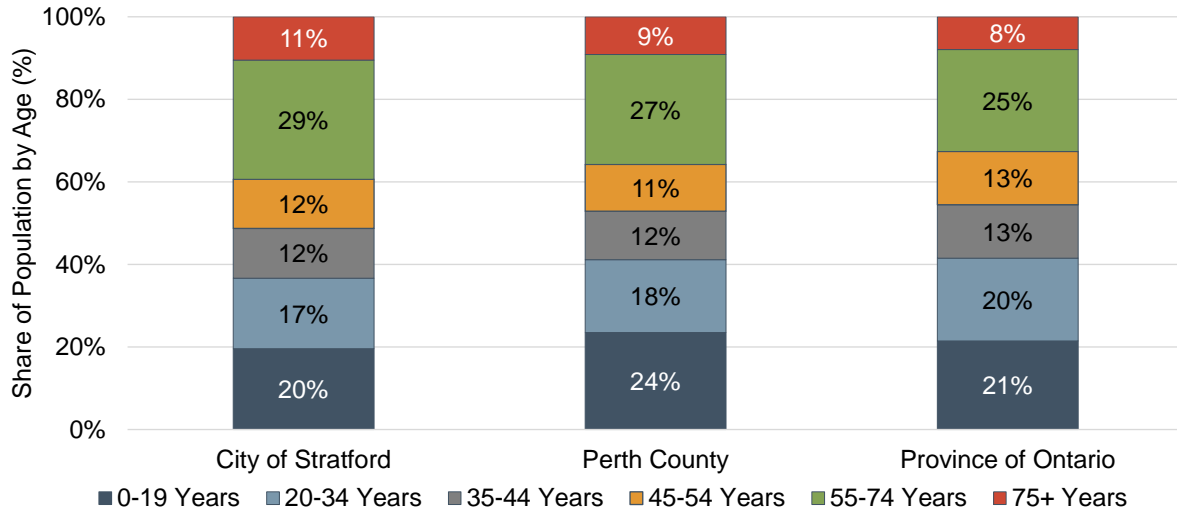
Stratford has a moderately older age profile than the provincial and County averages, with 39% of the population over the age of 55, as illustrated in Figure 4.^[1] Stratford's median age is 46, which is higher than Perth County's median age of 42 and the provincial median age of 42.^[2] Over the past decade, the age structure of Stratford has been changing with a notable increase in the population aged 55-74 years. The City experienced an overall increase in population over the 2011 to 2021 period, with a significant increase in the 55+ age group population, as shown in Figure 5. This is in contrast to all other age groups which had a decline or marginal increase in population over the period.

^[1] Based on 2021 Census single year of age data.

^[2] 2021 Statistics Canada Census.

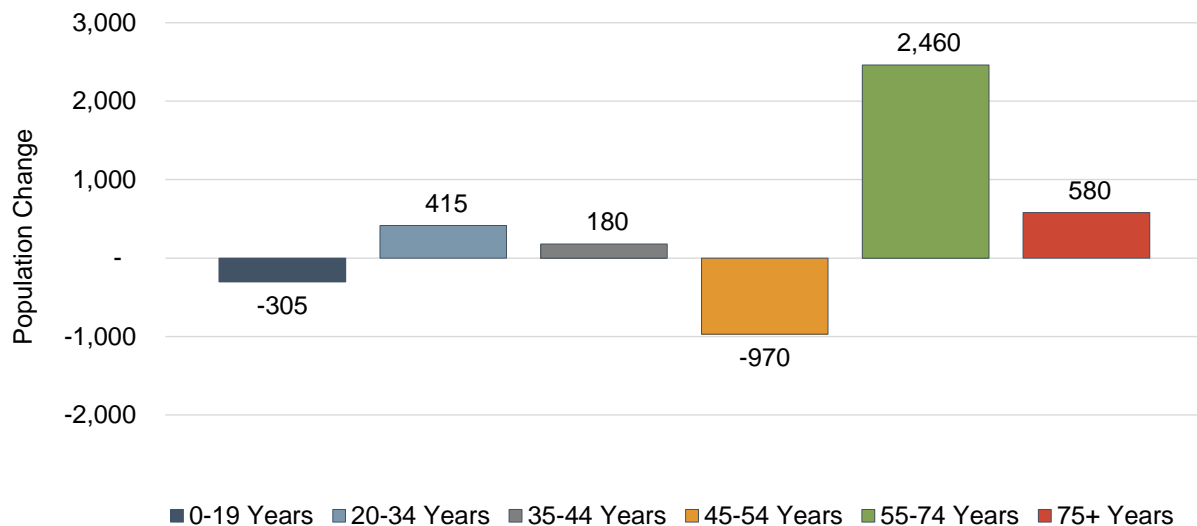


Figure 4
City of Stratford, Perth County, and Province of Ontario
Population by Age Cohort, 2021



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Census data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

Figure 5
City of Stratford
Population Growth by Age Cohort, 2011 to 2021



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Census Data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



2.3 Understanding the Key Components of Population Growth

There are two primary components of population growth: natural increase (i.e., births less deaths), and net migration. Net migration can be broken into three broad categories, including:

- **International Net Migration** – represents international immigration less emigrants, plus net non-permanent residents.
- **Inter-Provincial Net Migration** – comprises in-migration less out-migration from other Canadian provinces/territories.
- **Intra-Provincial Net Migration** – includes in-migration less out-migration from elsewhere in the Province of Ontario.

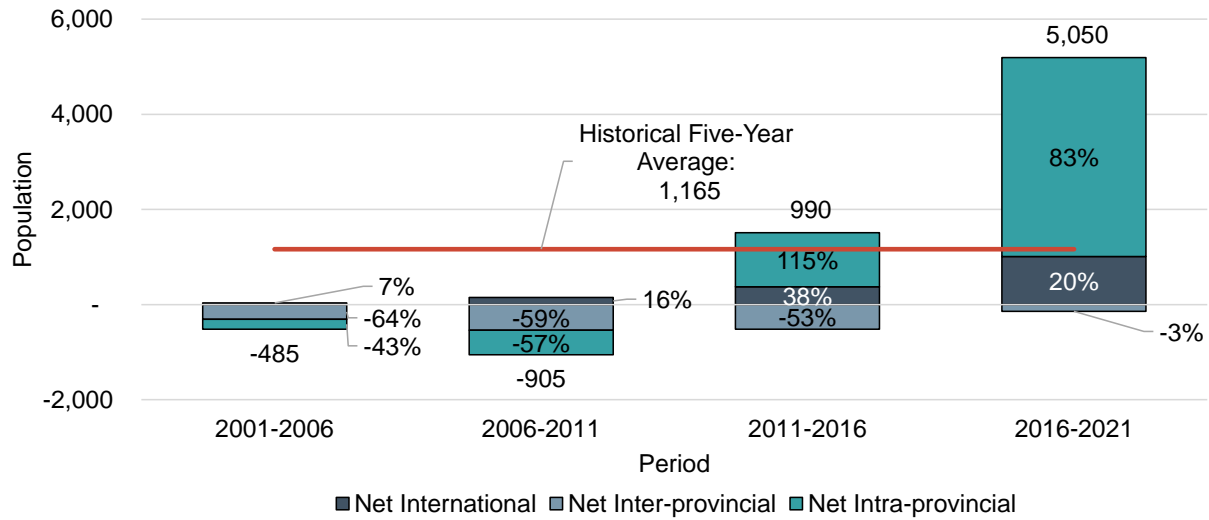
Figure 6 summarizes historical net migration trends between 2001 and 2021 within the Perth County Census Division (C.D.),^[1] by type of net migration. Key observations are as follows:

- Over the 20 years reviewed, net migration in the Perth County C.D. averaged approximately 1,165 persons per five-year Census period or 210 persons per year.
- Intra-provincial net migration represented the largest driver of net migration to the Perth County C.D. Over the 2015 to 2021 period, the Waterloo Region and the G.T.H.A. were the largest contributors of intra-provincial net migration to the Perth County C.D., with 26% and 15% of total net migration, respectively, as shown in Figure 7. Over this period, intra-provincial net migration largely comprised the 25-44 population age group (35%), followed by the 0-17 (21%) and 45-64 (20%) age groups.
- International migration also represented an increasing share of overall net migration. The amount of international migration to the Perth County C.D. increased from 35 during the 2001 to 2006 period to 1,015 during the most recent 2016 to 2021 period.

^[1] Perth County Census Division includes Perth County (i.e., Township of Perth South, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, and Municipality of North Perth), the City of Stratford, and the Town of St. Marys.



Figure 6
Perth County Census Division
Historical Net Migration Trends, 2001 to 2021

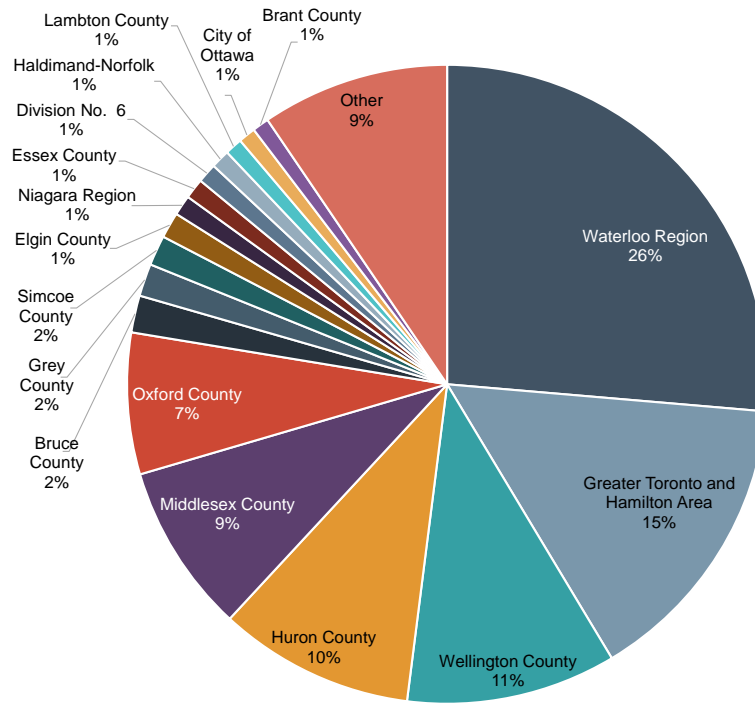


Note: Perth County Census Division includes Perth County (i.e., Township of Perth South, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, and Municipality of North Perth), the City of Stratford, and the Town of St. Marys.

Source: Data derived from Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0136-01 by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



Figure 7
Perth County Census Division
Share of Intra-Provincial Migration, 2015 to 2021



Note: Perth County Census Division includes Perth County (i.e., Township of Perth South, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, and Municipality of North Perth), the City of Stratford, and the Town of St. Marys.

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Custom Data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

3. Stratford's Housing Market

3.1 Household Growth Trends

As shown in Figure 8, Stratford's 2021 housing base comprised approximately 14,740 occupied dwelling units, largely consisting of low-density housing (single detached/semi-detached) which accounts for 64% of units.^[1] Stratford's housing base comprised

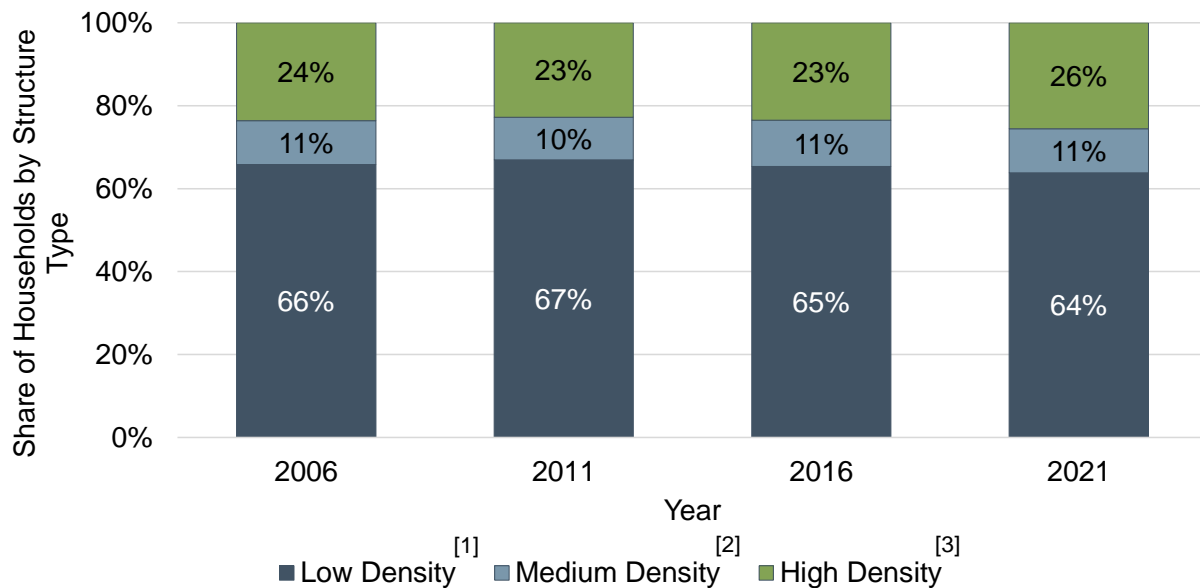
^[1] Derived from the 2021 Statistics Canada Census.



approximately 11% and 26% medium- and high-density units, respectively. Key observations include:

- Stratford's housing base has historically been predominantly owner-occupied low-density units (single and semi-detached); and
- The local housing market is gradually becoming more diverse with a greater share of higher-density units.

Figure 8
City of Stratford
Housing by Structure Type, 2006 to 2021



[1] Includes single and semi-detached units.

[2] Includes townhouses and apartments in duplexes.

[3] Includes bachelor, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom+ apartment units.

Notes: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Census data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

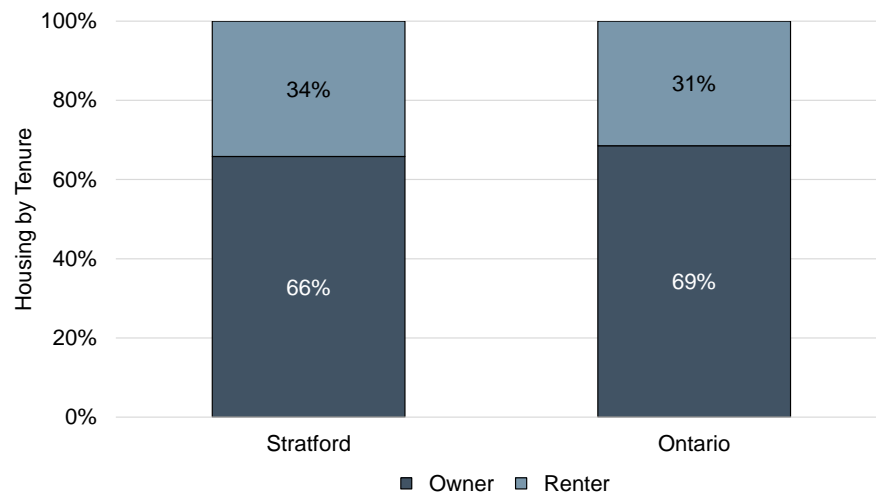
3.1.1 Housing Tenure

Housing tenure falls under two categories: owner occupied, and renter occupied. As shown in Figure 9, within the City of Stratford in 2021, 66% of housing units are owner



occupied and 34% are renter occupied.^[1] The City of Stratford has a higher share of renter households than the provincial average of 31%.

Figure 9
City of Stratford
Housing by Tenure, 2021



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0232-01 by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

3.1.2 Rental Housing Market

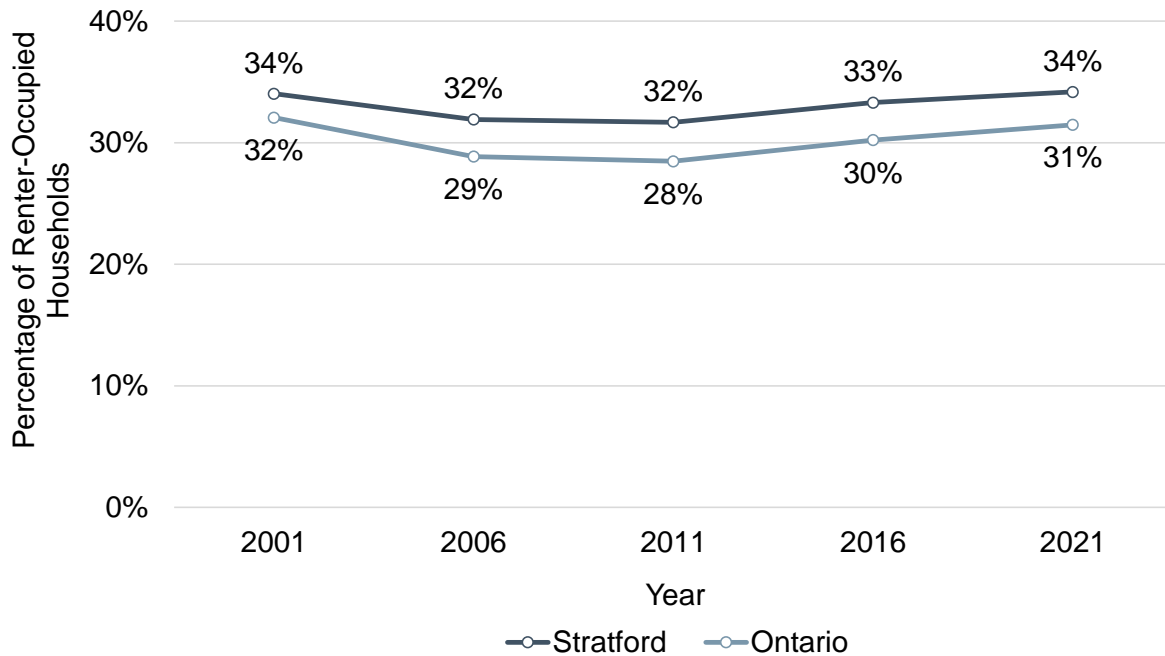
Figure 10 summarizes the historical share of renter-occupied units within Stratford and the Province over the 2001 to 2021 period. Key findings include:

- The share of renter-occupied households in Stratford decreased from 34% in 2001 to 32% in 2011, and increased from 32% in 2011 to 34% in 2021;
- Renter-occupied households as a proportion of total dwellings in Stratford remained higher than the Province of Ontario throughout the 2001 to 2021 period; and
- Over the 2001 to 2021 period, the number of renter-occupied housing units in Stratford increased from 4,165 to 5,040.

^[1] Based on 2021 Statistics Canada Census Profile data. Excludes non-Census post-secondary student households.



Figure 10
City of Stratford
Renter-Occupied Dwellings, 2001 to 2021



Note: The renter-occupied household metrics do not include non-Census dwelling units.

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Census data, 2001-2021, by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

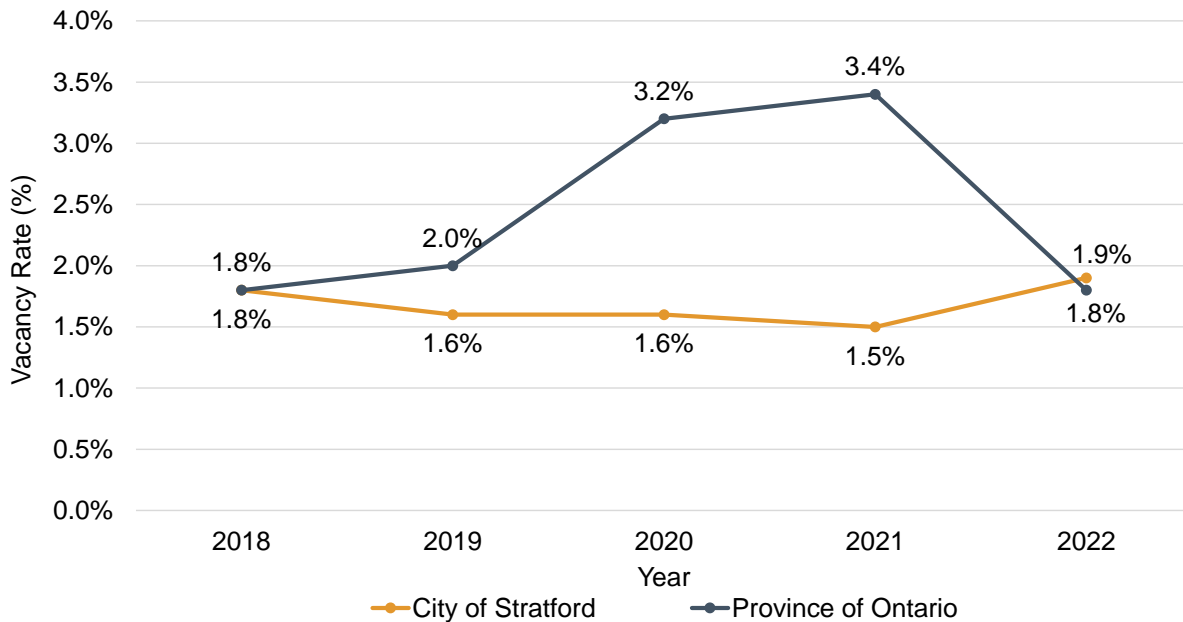
Figure 11 provides a summary of average rental vacancy rates for 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom apartments in the primary rental market over the past five years in Stratford compared to the provincial average.^[1] Key observations include:

- As of October 2022, the overall vacancy rate is 1.9% in Stratford, similar to the provincial average of 1.8%; and
- Over the past five years, Stratford's vacancy rate has been below the provincial five-year average (2.4%), ranging between 1.5% and 1.9%.

^[1] CMHC identifies the primary rental market as structures that have at least three rental units. These properties are typically operated by an owner, manager, or building superintendent.



Figure 11
City of Stratford
Historical Vacancy Rates, 2018 to 2022



Source: Derived from CMHC Housing Market by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

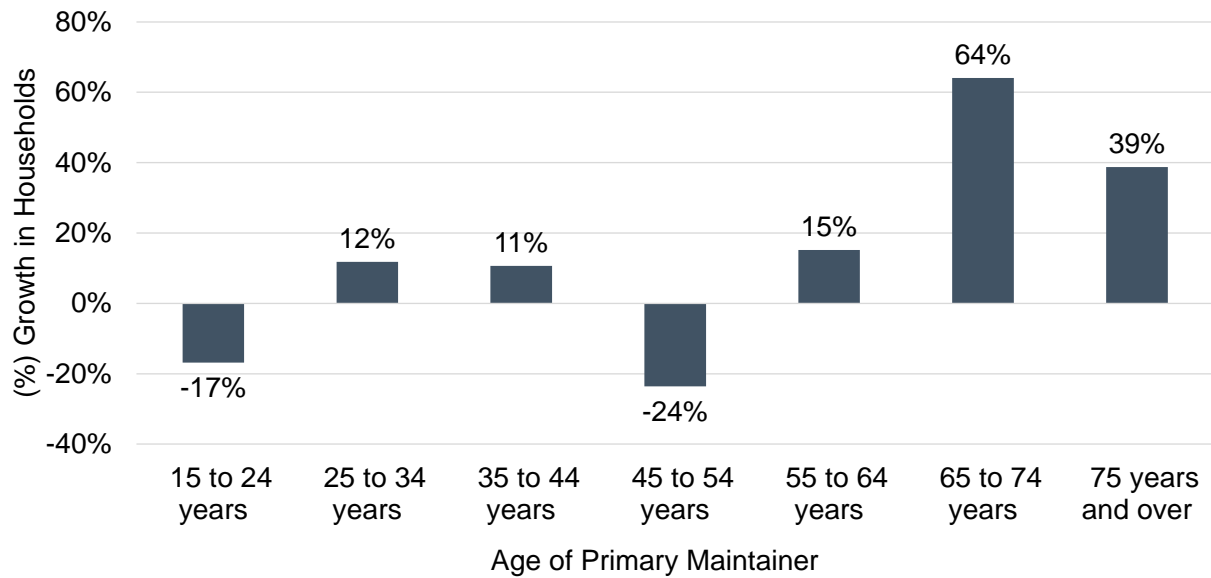
Typically, a rental vacancy rate of approximately 3% is considered healthy. It is noted that low average rental vacancy rates currently experienced in Stratford and across the Province continue to place an upward price pressure on rents.

3.1.3 Household Growth by Age and Size

Figure 12 summarizes 2016 to 2021 household growth by age of primary household maintainer in Stratford. The City has experienced strong household growth in the 55+ age cohort, including empty nesters/young seniors (55-64) and seniors (65+). Household growth in units maintained by those 55+ accounted for approximately 118% of the total unit increase over the 2016 to 2021 period. During the same time period, moderately strong growth was experienced in households maintained by younger age groups (25-34 and 35-44 age groups), while a decline occurred in the number of households maintained by those aged 15-24 and 45-54.



Figure 12
City of Stratford
Growth in the Number of Households by Age of Primary Maintainer, 2016 to 2021



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Census data, 2016-2021, by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

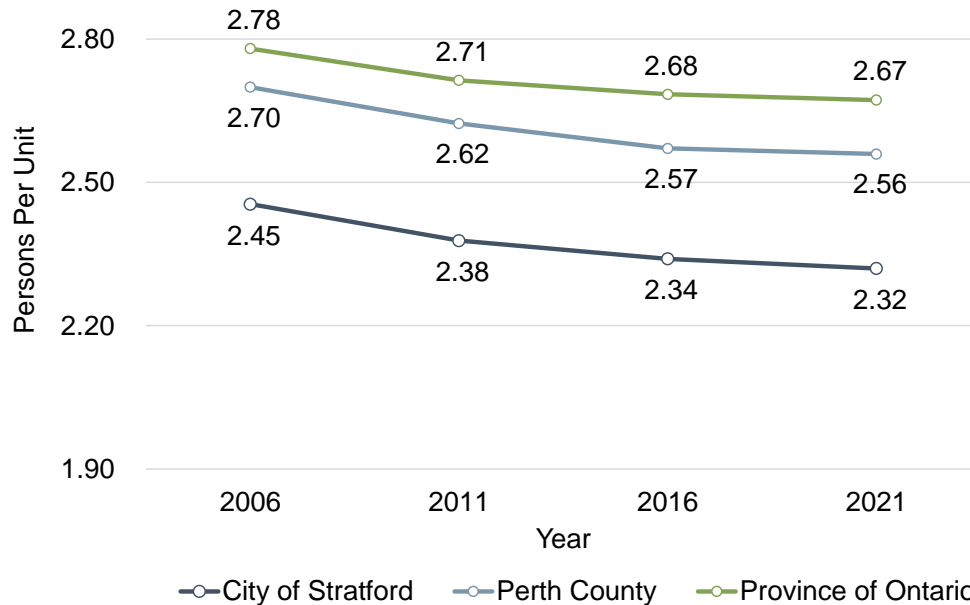
Figure 13 summarizes average housing occupancy in the City of Stratford in comparison to Perth County and the Province of Ontario. This is expressed as the average number of persons per dwelling unit (P.P.U.).^[1] The general downward trend in housing occupancy has been driven by the aging of the population which increases the proportionate share of empty nester and single-occupancy households. As shown, the P.P.U. decline in Stratford has been slightly less pronounced than in Perth County. The City's P.P.U. declined over the 2006 to 2021 period, with a P.P.U. of 2.32 in 2021, which is lower than Perth County's P.P.U. of 2.56 in 2021. The City and the County may notice a change in P.P.U. trends due to the increase in multigenerational homes. Some of the factors affecting the increase in multigenerational homes include the aging

^[1] Average number of persons per unit (P.P.U.) defined as the total population divided by the number of occupied dwelling units.



of the population, an increase in share of indigenous and newcomer families, housing cost hikes and the need for family caregiving.^[1]

Figure 13
City of Stratford, Perth County and Ontario
Average Household Occupancy, 2006 to 2021



Note: Population includes a net Census undercount estimated at approximately 3.1%.
Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Census data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

3.2 Housing Development Activity

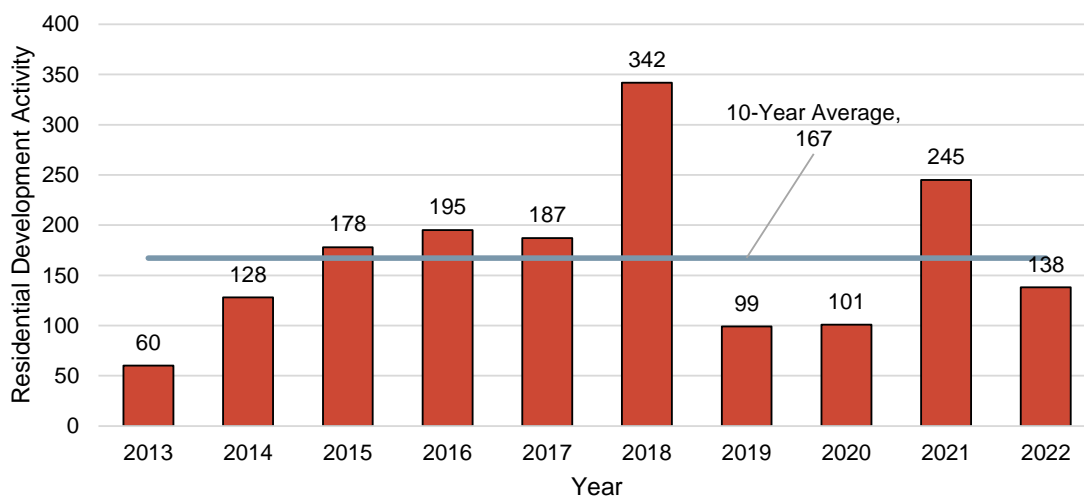
Over the 2013 to 2022 period, Stratford averaged 167 residential units constructed per year, as illustrated in Figure 14. In the past five years, housing growth has accelerated, with an average of 185 units per year over the 2018 to 2022 period. As illustrated in Figure 15, over the past decade, low-density housing construction has declined as a share of total housing development, with a significant increase in the share of high-

^[1] <https://vanierinstitute.ca/sharing-a-roof-multigenerational-homes-in-canada-2021-census-update/>



density units (i.e., apartments and condominiums) and medium-density units (i.e., townhouses).

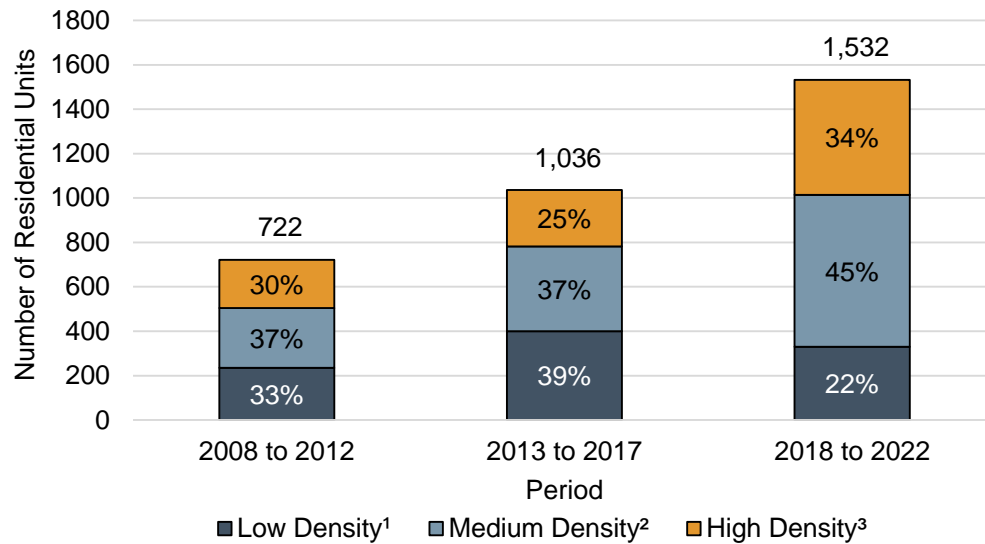
Figure 14
City of Stratford
New Housing Development, 2013 to 2022



Source: Derived from City of Stratford Building Permits Data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



Figure 15
City of Stratford
New Housing Construction by Structure Type, 2008 to 2022



¹ Includes single and semi-detached units.

² Includes townhouses and apartments in duplexes.

³ Includes bachelor, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom+ apartment units.

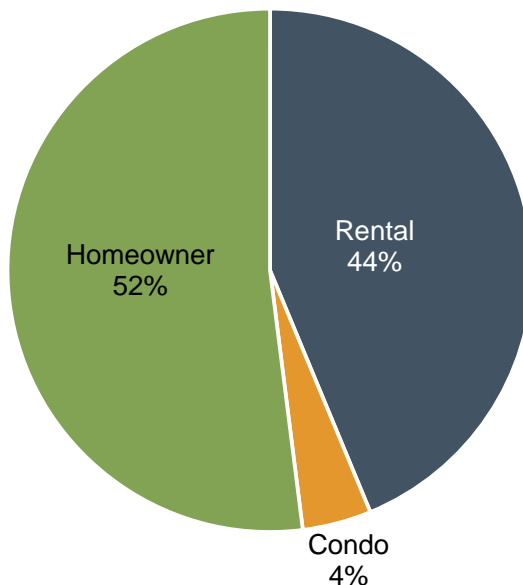
Notes: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Historical 2008 to 2022 data derived from City of Stratford building permits by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

Over the past five years (2018 to 2022), 52% of new housing completions have been in the home-ownership market, as presented in Figure 16. This is compared to 44% for purpose-built rentals and 4% for condominiums.



Figure 16
Stratford Census Agglomeration
Housing Completions by Intended Market, 2018 to 2022



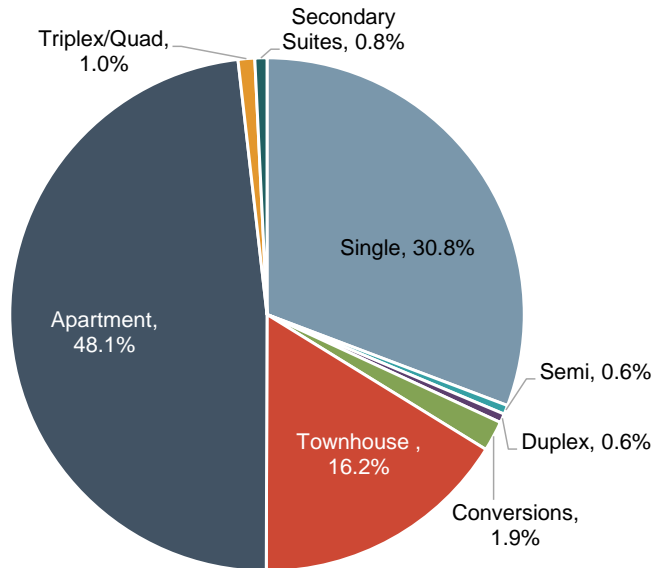
Source: Derived from CMHC's Absorbed Housing Units by Intended Market data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

Building permit activity by housing type in Stratford over the past five years (2018 to 2022) is presented in Figure 17. As illustrated:

- There has been a shift to higher-density development, with about 50% of units being high density and 17% being medium density, compared to 31% of total units being low density.
- Stratford experienced relatively strong apartment growth, accounting for 48% of the housing unit development over the period.



Figure 17
City of Stratford
Residential Development Activity by Type (Units), 2018 to 2022



Source: Adapted from the City of Stratford's building permit data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

Stratford has demonstrated a growing demand to accommodate housing through intensification. In accordance with the City's current O.P., Stratford has an intensification housing target of 25%. The City achieved an average intensification rate of 44% from 2013 to 2022, significantly higher than the target. Recent intensification activity has also been significantly higher than the rate of residential intensification activity over the previous 10-year period, where intensification accounted for 20% of the City's total residential development.^[1] Of the residential intensification achieved over the past decade, 81% of the units have been apartments, 10% singles/semis and 9% townhouses/duplexes.^[2]

^[1] City of Stratford Residential Intensification Assessment, prepared by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2012.

^[2] Derived from City of Stratford 2013 to 2022 residential building permit data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



3.2.1 Historical Housing Propensity Trends by Structure Type, 2021

Figure 18 summarizes historical housing propensity (i.e., demand) trends by structure type for permanent households in the City of Stratford based on 2021 Statistics Canada Census data. Age-specific propensities measure housing demand by dwelling structure type, by age of household maintainer.

As previously mentioned, population age structure influences the socio-economic characteristics of the population related to income/affordability, lifestyle, family size, lifestyle decisions, health and mobility. Propensities for high-density housing (apartments and condominium units) are highest among younger age groups, while propensities for low-density housing (single and semi-detached housing) tend to be highest among population age groups between 35 and 64 years of age.

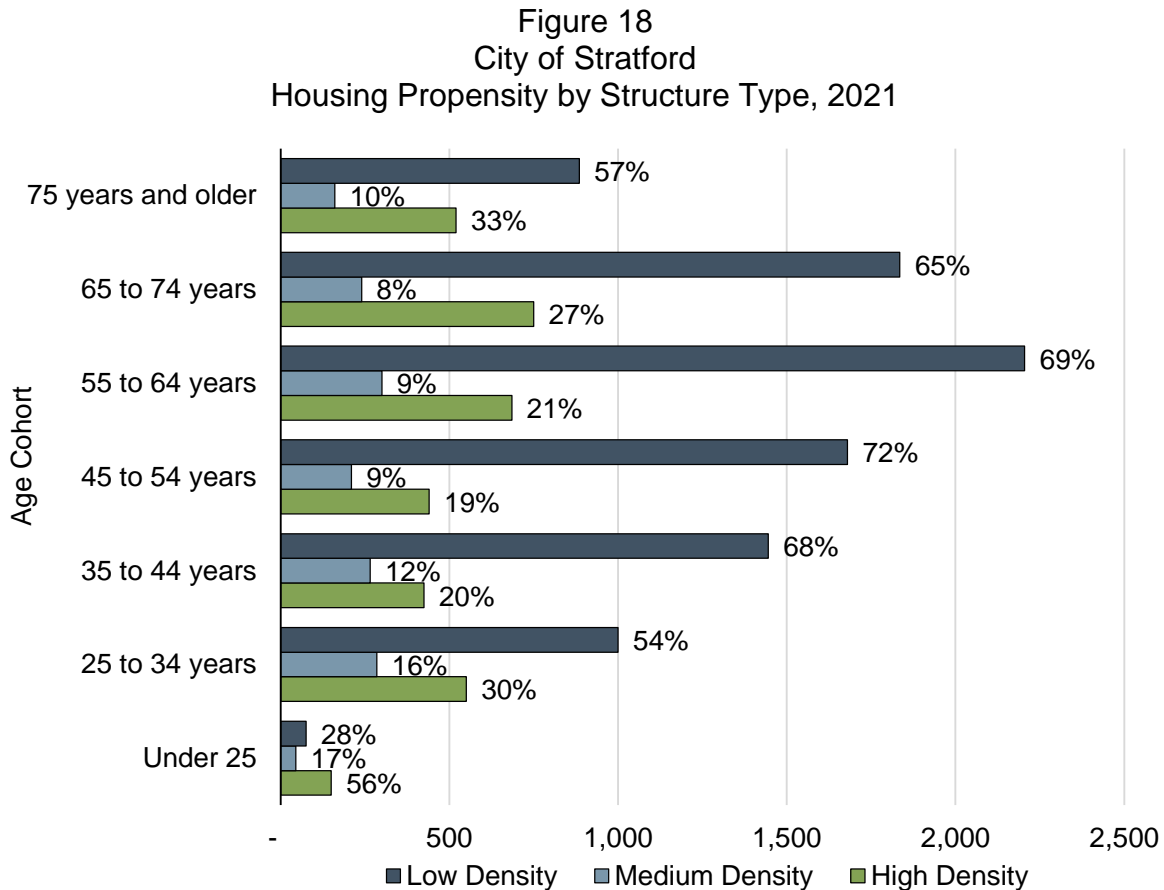
As previously discussed, Stratford's population is aging. As will be discussed further, the 55+ age group has grown considerably over the past 20 years and is expected to increase in both percentage and absolute terms over the next several decades. As the average age of the City of Stratford population continues to increase, it is anticipated that the demand for higher-density housing forms will also continue to gradually increase.

The aging of the City's population is also anticipated to drive the need for seniors' housing and other housing forms geared to older adults (e.g., assisted living, affordable housing, adult lifestyle housing). Given the diversity of the 55 to 74 and 75+ population age groups, forecast housing demand across the City of Stratford within this broad 55+ demographic group is anticipated to vary considerably.

Within the 55+ age group, housing demand within the 55-74 age group is anticipated to be relatively stronger for ground-oriented housing forms (i.e., single detached, semi-detached and townhouses) that provide proximity to urban amenities, municipal services and community infrastructure. With respect to the 75+ age group, the physical and socio-economic characteristics of this age group (on average) are considerably different than those of younger seniors, empty nesters and working adults with respect to income, mobility and health. Typically, these characteristics represent a key driver behind their propensity for medium- and high-density housing forms (including seniors' housing) that are in proximity to urban amenities, health care services and other community facilities geared toward this age group.



In addition, the City of Stratford is also anticipated to accommodate a growing share of young adults and new families seeking competitively priced home ownership and rental opportunities. Accordingly, opportunities should be explored to provide a mix of future housing across a range of density types, to accommodate those with varying levels of income (including affordable housing options) within new greenfield areas, as well as in priority intensification areas across the City's built-up area.



Notes: Low Density captures single and semi-detached units. Medium Density captures townhouses and apartments in duplexes. High Density includes bachelor, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom+ apartments.

Source: Data from Statistics Canada Census 2021, derived by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



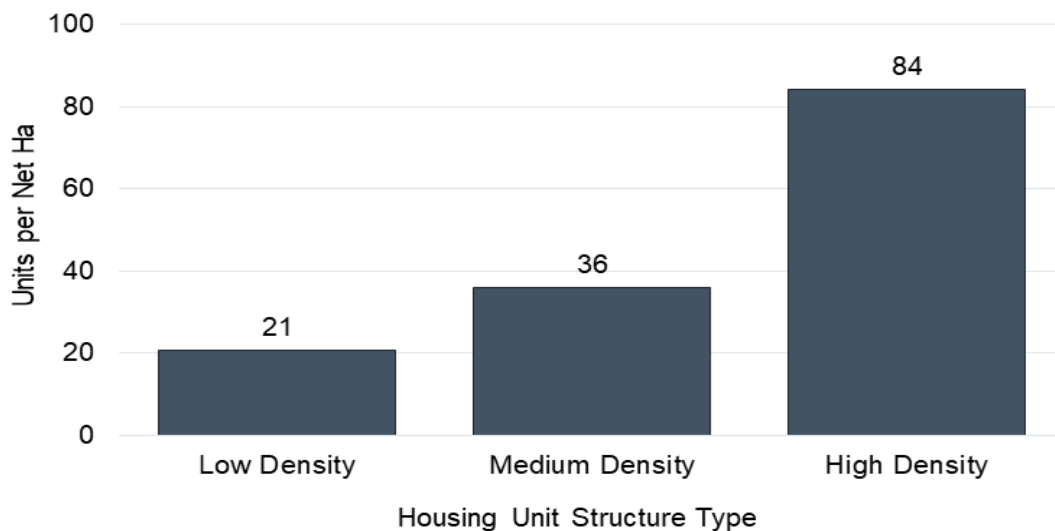
3.3 Density Assessment in Recently Developed Areas

3.3.1 Existing Units Per Net Hectare

The City of Stratford has currently achieved an overall average of 37 units per net hectare in recently developed areas (i.e., areas developed since 2012). Units per net hectare is based on the number of units in the area net of any land that is not for private use. Figure 19 provides a breakdown of the units per hectare by housing unit type. Key findings include:

- Low-density units, comprising single detached and semi-detached, have an average of 21 units per net hectare;
- Medium-density units, comprising townhouse units, have an average of 36 units per net hectare; and
- High-density units, comprising apartments, have an average of 84 units per net hectare.

Figure 19
City of Stratford
Average Units Per Net Hectare by Housing Type in Newly Developing Areas,
2012 to 2023



Notes: Low Density captures single and semi-detached units. Medium Density captures townhouses and apartments in duplexes. High Density includes bachelor, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom+ apartments.

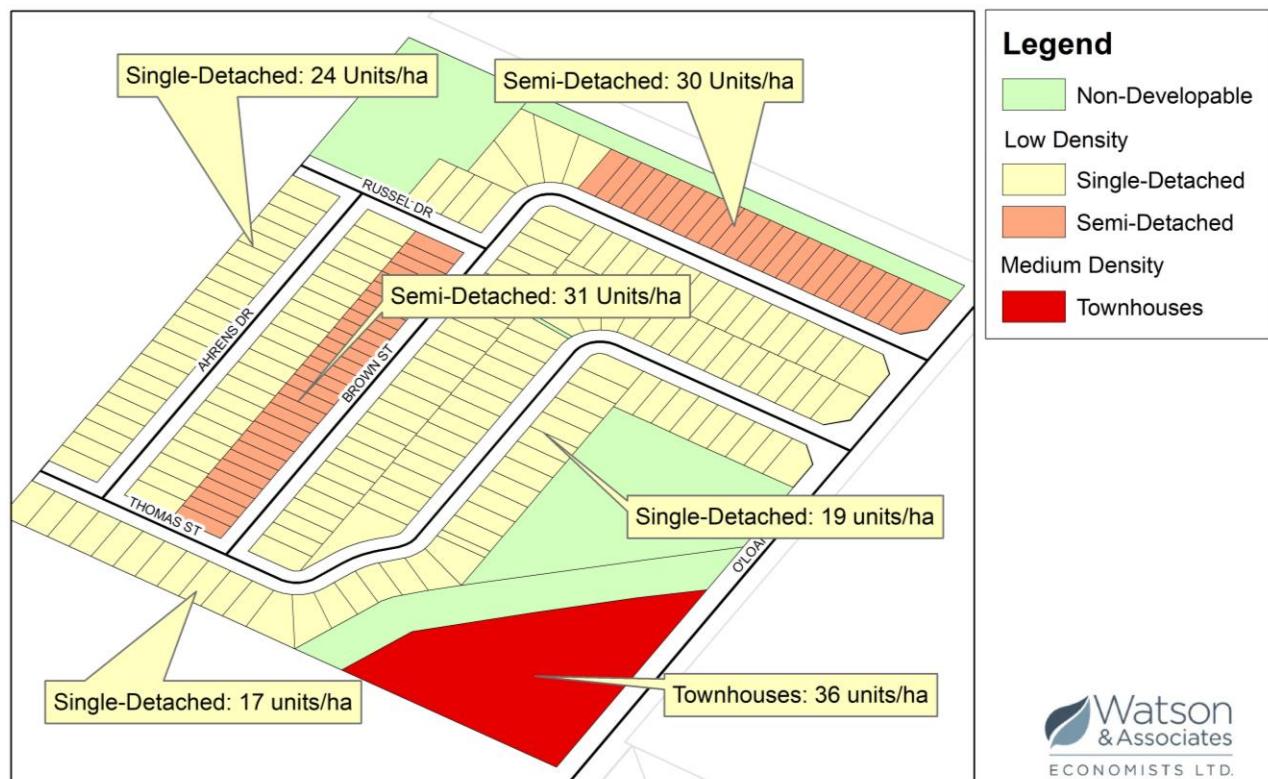
Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., based on a spatial review of the City of Stratford's building permit activity, 2012 to 2023.



3.3.2 Factors Impacting Density

The density of a development is impacted by the size of the lots, housing mix and the development form. Figure 20 and Figure 21 provides an example of a newly developed area in the City with a mix of low- and medium-density housing types. In the example, the average density of single detached lots ranges from 17 to 24 units/hectare; the variation is due to slight differences to both the depth and width of the lot. Furthermore, as identified in the example, average semi-detached lots have a higher density of approximately 30 to 31 units per net hectare, as a result of having a lot size that is 27% smaller than the average single detached lot. Finally, the townhouse development in the example has an average density of 36 units per net hectare and can accommodate up to 16 additional units per net hectare than the average single detached lot in this example.

Figure 20
City of Stratford
Examples of Average Units Per Net Hectare



Note: Common elements and internal roadways of the townhouse development have been netted out of the density calculation.



Figure 21
City of Stratford
Examples of Average Units Per Net Hectare



Notes: Locations above include developments in Stratford west of O'Loane Avenue.
Source: Google Earth.

As previously discussed, high-density housing developments in the City of Stratford have an average of 84 units per net hectare. Recently constructed high-density developments in Stratford largely comprise four- to five-storey apartment buildings with large surface parking lots. Figure 22 provides examples of high-density development within the City of Stratford. Over the forecast period, it is anticipated the City of Stratford will continue to accommodate mid-rise apartment buildings (up to six storeys), as well as other high-density housing options, including stacked townhouses (i.e., units stacked in two- to three-storey developments).



Figure 22
City of Stratford
Examples of Average Units Per Net Hectare
High-Density Housing Developments



Notes: The locations above include developments in Stratford at 255 John Street North (63 units/net hectare) and 105 Oxford Street (102 units/net hectare).
Source: Google Earth.

4. Stratford Employment and Non-Residential Development Growth Trends

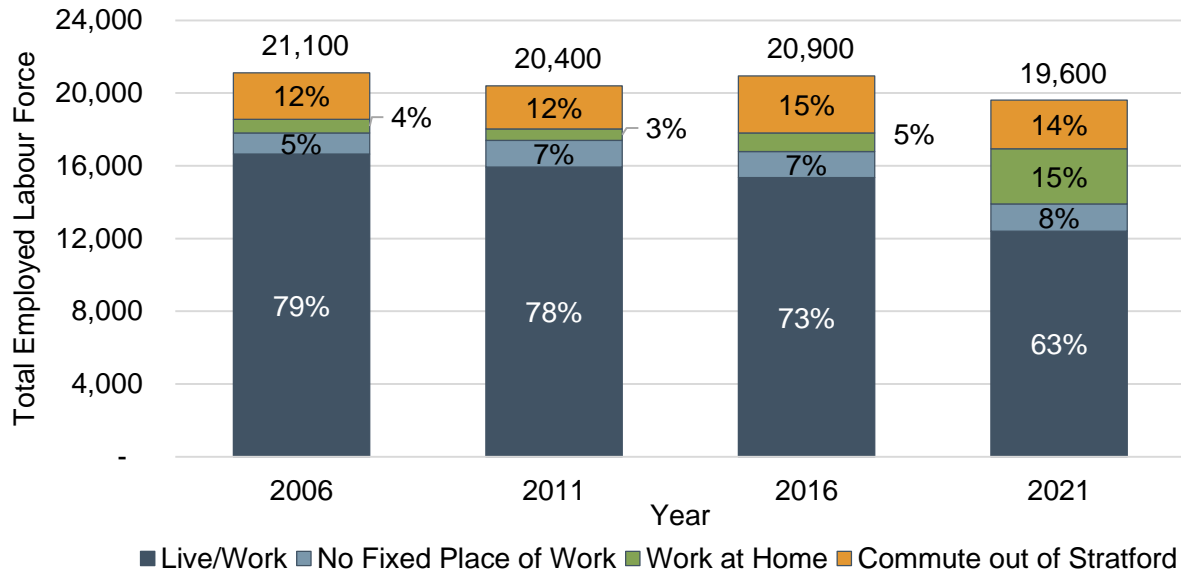
4.1 Labour Force and Commuting Trends

Figure 23 summarizes historical trends in the City of Stratford's labour force base by place of work. The size of Stratford's employed labour force decreased marginally over the 2006 to 2021 period, with a total employed labour force of 19,600 in 2021. As of 2021, approximately 86% of Stratford's employed labour force lives and works in the municipality or works from home. A relatively large share (14%) of the City's employed labour force commutes outside Stratford for employment.

Figure 24 summarizes the locations to where Stratford residents commute for employment, and from where those employed in Stratford commute. Of the employed labour force, 79% work within Stratford; meanwhile, 3% commute to Kitchener, 2% commute to Perth East, 2% commute to St. Marys, 2% commute to Waterloo, 2% commute to West Perth, and 10% commute to the remaining municipalities. Of the total employment base in Stratford, 59% of jobs are held by Stratford residents, while 41% commute from other municipalities: 7% from Perth East, 6% from West Perth, 3% from St. Marys, 3% from Perth South, 3% from London, 3% from Kitchener, and the remaining from other municipalities.



Figure 23
City of Stratford
Employed Labour by Place of Work (2006 to 2021)



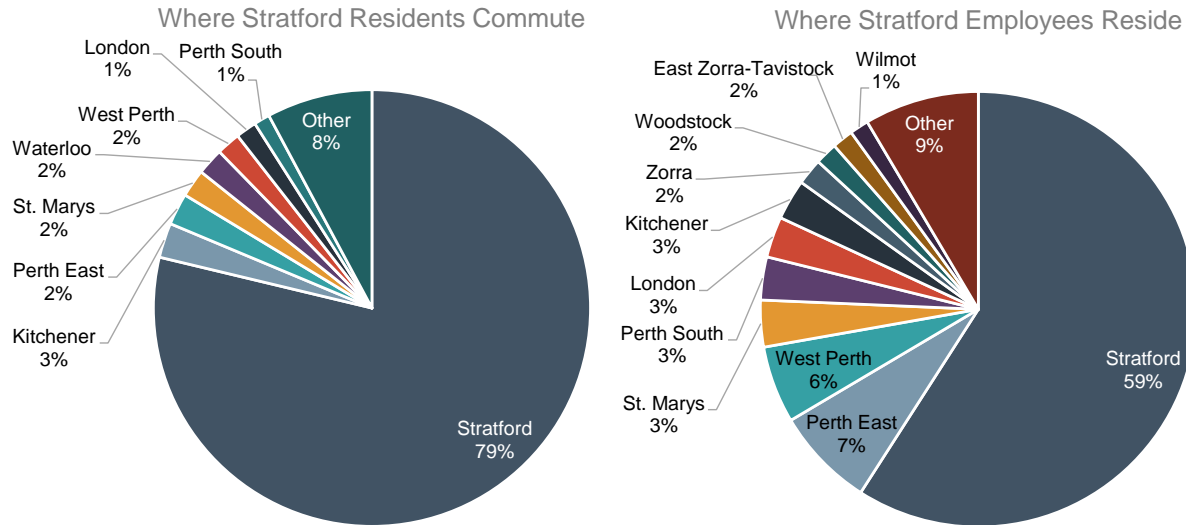
Notes:

- Total employed labour force metrics include work at home and no fixed place of work.
- No fixed place of work is defined by Statistics Canada as "persons who do not go from home to the same workplace location at the beginning of each shift. Such persons include building and landscape contractors, travelling salespersons, independent truck drivers, etc."
- Numbers have been rounded.

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada, 2006 to 2021, by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



Figure 24
City of Stratford
Commuting Patterns, 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census; analysis by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

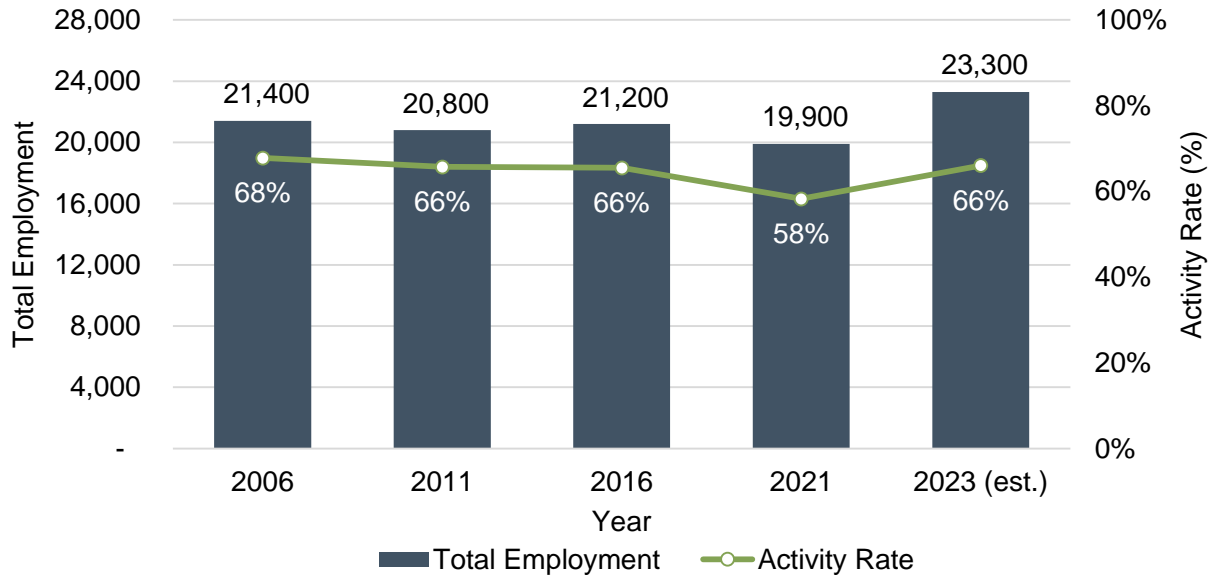
4.2 Employment Growth Trends and Industry Clusters

Figure 25 illustrates the City of Stratford's employment base over the 2006 to 2023 period. Key observations include:

- Stratford's employment base remained relatively stable from 2006 to 2016 and then declined from approximately 21,200 in 2016 to 19,900 in 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic;
- The city's employment base is estimated to have increased to 23,300 in 2023 reflecting the post COVID-19 economic recovery and broader growth drivers; and
- Over the 2006 to 2021 period, Stratford's employment activity rate (ratio of jobs per population) declined from 68% to 58%, and then rebounded to 66% in 2023.



Figure 25
City of Stratford
Total Employment and Activity Rate, 2006 to 2023



Notes:

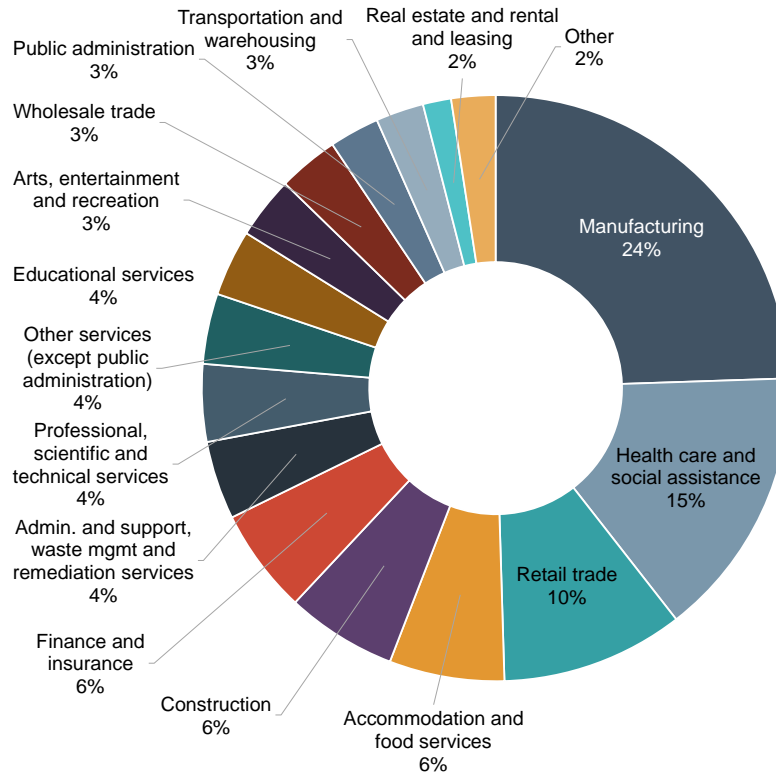
- Total employment metrics include work at home and no fixed place of work.
- Activity rates include net Census undercount estimated at 2.8%.
- Numbers have been rounded.

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada, 2006 to 2021, by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

As illustrated in Figure 26, Stratford's employment base is highly oriented to commercial and institutional sectors. The largest sectors, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and retail trade, account for 49% of total employment, followed by accommodation and food services (6%), construction (6%), finance and insurance (6%), administrative and support, waste management and remediation services (4%), and professional and scientific and technical services (4%).



Figure 26
City of Stratford
Employment Structure, 2022



Note: Figures include employed and self-employed jobs. Management of companies and enterprises has been excluded from this list due to data unavailability.

Source: Derived from EMSI data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

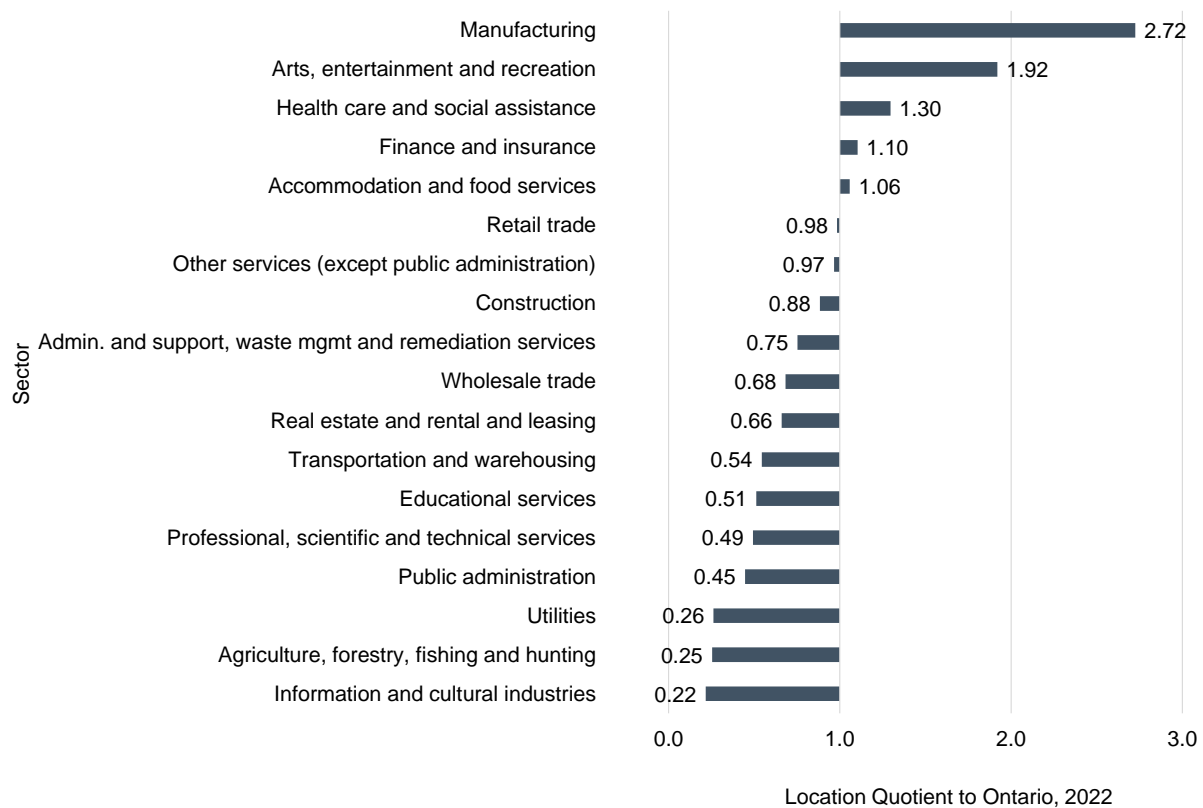
Figure 27 illustrates the strength of employment sectors in Stratford relative to the Province using Location Quotients (L.Q.).^[1] Stratford has a relatively high concentration of employment in sectors such as manufacturing; arts, entertainment and recreation; health care and social assistance; finance and insurance; and accommodation and food services. In contrast, Stratford has a relatively low concentration of employment in

^[1] An L.Q. of 1.0 identifies that the concentration of employment by sector is consistent with the broader employment base average. An L.Q. of greater than 1.0 identifies that the concentration of employment in a given employment sector is higher than the broader base average, which suggests a relatively high concentration of a particular employment sector or “cluster.”



information and cultural industries; agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; utilities; public administration; and professional, scientific and technical services.

Figure 27
City of Stratford
Location Quotients by Sector Relative to Ontario, 2022



Note: Figures include employed and self-employed jobs. Management of companies and enterprises has been excluded from this list due to data unavailability.

Source: Derived from EMSI data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

5. Stratford's Non-Residential Market Profile

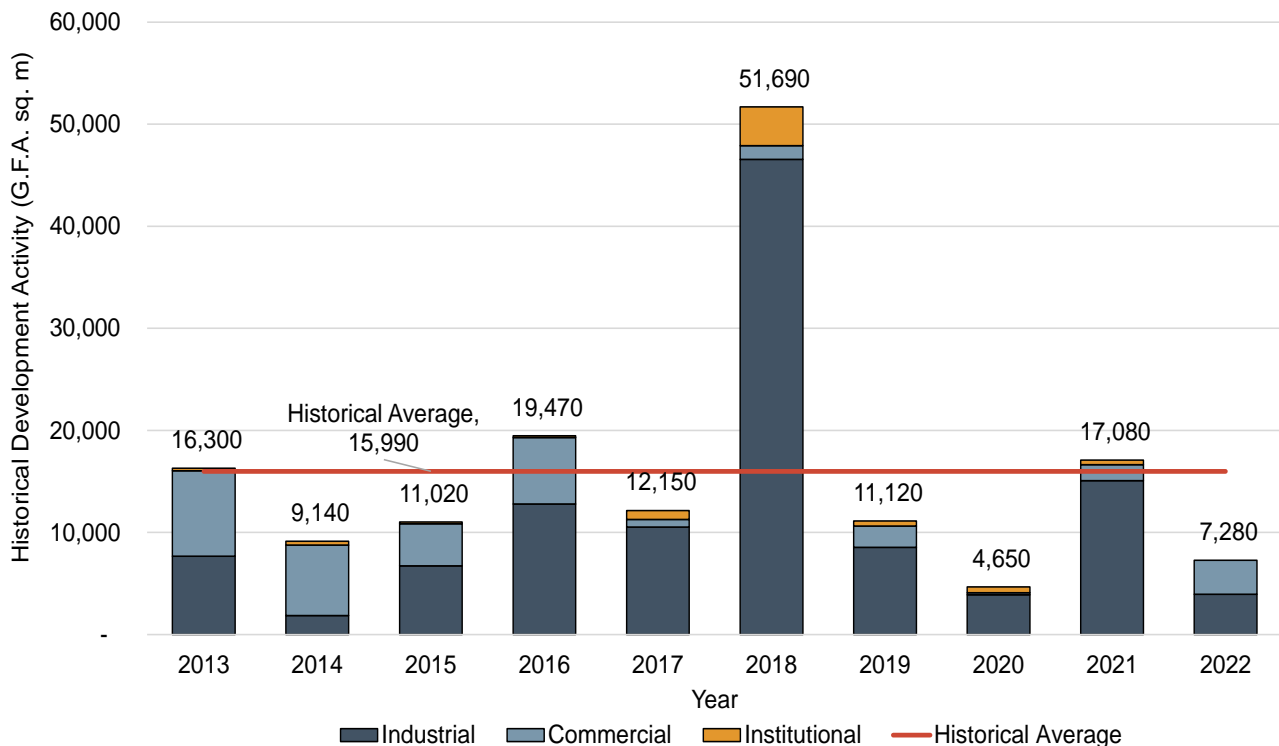
The following provides an assessment of recent urban non-residential development growth trends in Stratford, as well as a profile of the City's Employment Areas, and its retail commercial sector.



5.1 Recent Non-Residential Development Activity and Trends

Over the 2013 to 2022 period, Stratford has averaged 15,990 sq.m (172,100 sq.ft.) of non-residential development activity annually, as summarized in Figure 28. Over the past decade (2013 to 2022), industrial development accounted for approximately 73% of development activity compared to 22% and 4% in the commercial and institutional sectors, respectively, as shown in Figure 29.

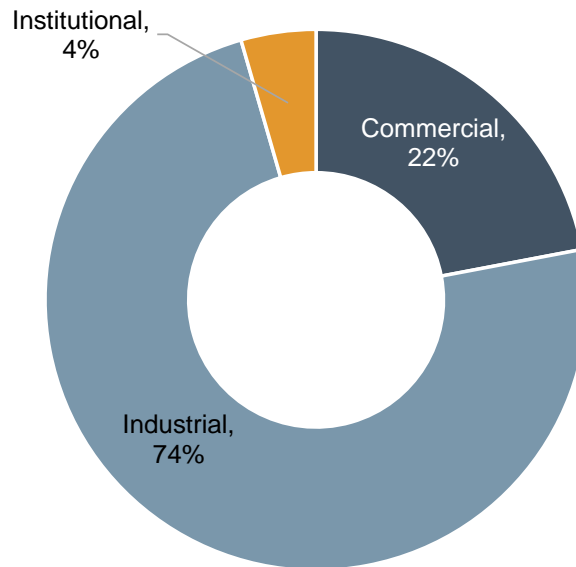
Figure 28
City of Stratford
Annual Non-Residential Development Activity, 2013 to 2022



Source: Derived from the City of Stratford's non-residential building permits 2013 to 2022 by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



Figure 29
City of Stratford
Non-Residential Development Activity by Sector, 2013 to 2022



Source: Derived from the City of Stratford's non-residential building permits 2013 to 2022 by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

5.2 Employment Areas Profile

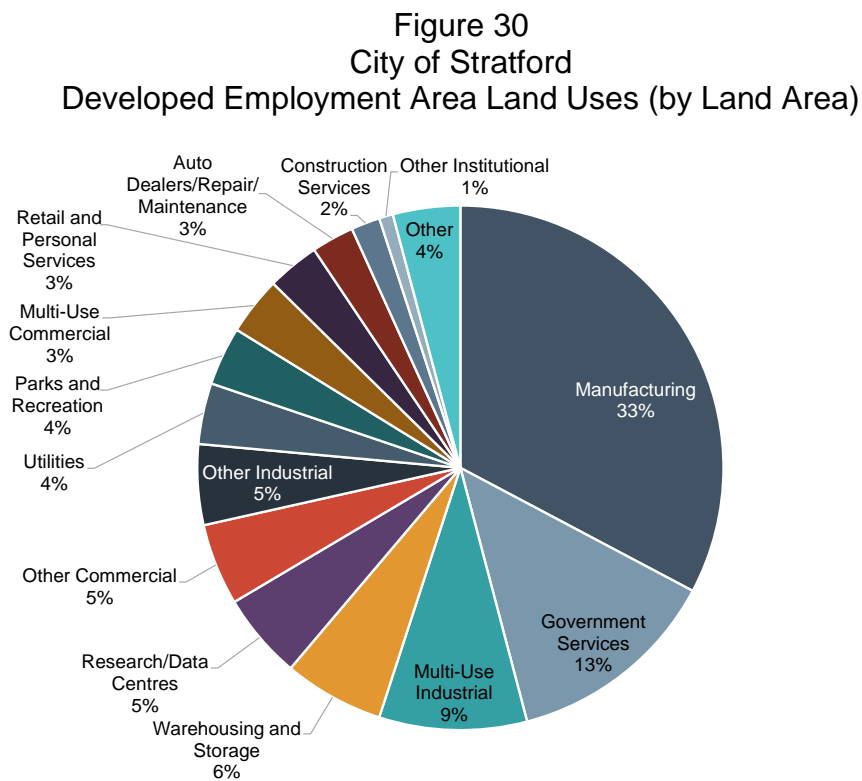
Stratford has approximately 440 net hectare (1,087 net acres) of developed employment land. Stratford's employment lands are organized into two main delineated Employment Areas located in southwest and southeast areas of the City. Stratford also has some employment lands outside these Employment Areas.

Employment Areas are an integral part of Stratford's economic development potential and accommodate a significant share of the City's businesses and employment. Employment Areas accommodate primarily export-based employment, including a wide range of industrial uses (e.g., manufacturing, distribution/logistics, transportation services), as well as specific commercial and institutional uses (e.g., office, service, ancillary/accessory retail) which generally support the industrial/business function of the industrial area. In contrast to other urban land uses (e.g., commercial and mixed-use areas), employment lands provide the opportunity to accommodate export-based



employment sectors that cannot be easily accommodated in other areas of the municipality.

Of Stratford's developed employment lands base, approximately 56% is within industrial sectors including construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, and transportation and warehousing, as shown in Figure 30. Stratford's Employment Areas also accommodate a range of commercial and institutional sectors including professional, scientific and technical services, auto dealerships, places of worship, long-term care homes, and government services.



Source: Derived from City of Stratford's data by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

Stratford has a strong and successful history of municipal employment land development. The City continues to be a key employment land developer in the municipality, assembling and servicing land. The municipality is responsible for subdivision design, infrastructure development, and land sales. The City's two active Employment Areas are summarized below:



- **Wright Business Park** is a 40-hectare (100-acre) municipally owned Employment Area located in the southwest part of Stratford. The Wright Business Park has been highly successful at attracting a range of industrial uses including manufacturing, warehousing and construction and has accommodated the majority of the City's new industrial development over the past decade. The Employment Area is largely built out with only a few vacant parcels remaining.
- **Crane West Business Park** is a 10-hectare (24-acre) development ready municipally owned Employment Area located in southwest part of Stratford. The Employment Area features four 2-hectare (5-acre) lots of which two are available for sale.

It is estimated that the Employment Areas have no available industrial building space for lease, which limits the City's ability to accommodate the immediate need for businesses seeking to expand or set-up a business in the City's Employment Areas.^[1] As such, opportunities to accommodate industrial growth in the City will require development of vacant Employment Area lands, which are in short supply.

Over the 2017 to 2022 period, 34 net hectares (83 net acres) of employment lands were absorbed in Stratford, representing an average of approximately 6 hectares (14 acres) per year. The development accommodated largely consisted of manufacturing, construction services, warehousing and utilities. Employment densities averaged 15 jobs per net hectare (6 jobs per net acre).^[2]

5.3 Retail Commercial Market

Stratford's commercial base is an integral part of the community, supporting jobs, as well as providing residents access to goods and services which enhances the overall quality of life for residents. Stratford has approximately 192,800 sq.m (approximately 2.1 million sq.ft.) of purpose-built retail and accommodation space on designated commercial lands (Commercial Area and Downtown Core). It is important to recognize that purpose-built retail space also accommodates institutional and office uses. On a per capita basis, Stratford has approximately 5.3 sq.m (57 sq.ft.) of retail space per

^[1] CBRE estimates that the City of Stratford has no available vacant building space for lease as of the second quarter of 2023 according to *CBRE Waterloo Industrial Figures, Q2 2023*.

^[2] Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. survey data, 2023.



resident. Relative to the population base, the size of the retail base in Stratford is considered high. The high per capita level of retail is largely a result of a supporting a vibrant tourism market, as well as supporting a trade area that extends beyond the City of Stratford.

The City has a small supply of vacant retail floorspace, 4,900 sq.m (approximately 53,000 sq.ft.). The City's retail building space vacancy rate as of 2023 is approximately 3% which is considered low.^[1] A healthy market range for a commercial vacancy is between 5% to 8% which allows for market choice for new retail businesses looking for retail space in the immediate term, as well as accommodating opportunities for existing retail businesses to review lease renewal options (i.e., expansion or relocation).

Over the 2018 to 2022 period, the City added approximately 1,710 sq.m or 18,400 sq.ft. of commercial building floorspace annually.^[2] Based on the City's population growth over this period, the City commercial floorspace is growing at a slightly lower pace (0.9% annually) than the growth rate of the City's population base (1.1% annually). This is generally consistent with trends experienced in other smaller markets in Ontario.

As summarized in Figure 31, approximately 70% of the purpose-built retail and accommodation space is accommodated on lands designated Commercial Area, while just under a third is accommodated in the City's Downtown Core.^[3] Lands designated Commercial Area support a range of commercial uses, including large format retail, while the Downtown Core supports a range of commercial uses, accommodated in smaller footprints. In addition to the Downtown Core there are four commercial corridors in the City on lands designated Commercial Area: Ontario Street, Erie Street, Huron Street, and Lorne Avenue. These commercial corridors are situated on the edge of the City and are orientated towards motorists, including providing convenient access to shoppers travelling on regional highways from beyond the local area.

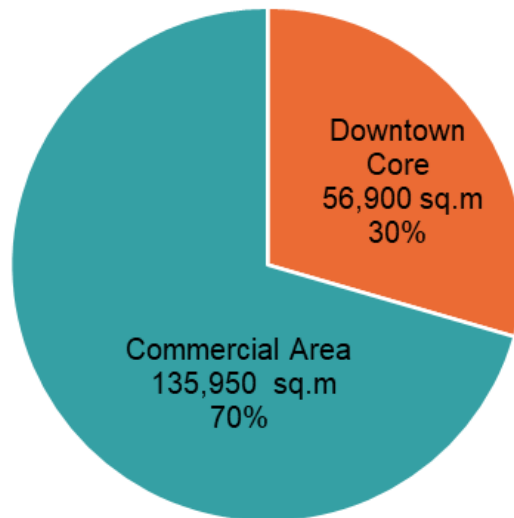
^[1] Retail vacancy excludes the following uses in the calculation: accommodation space (hotels/motels), automotive uses (e.g., gas stations, dealerships, car repairs, etc.), stand-alone office and medical clinics/office buildings.

^[2] Based on City of Stratford Non-Residential Building Permit Activity.

^[3] It is important to note that the City's Employment Areas also accommodate a small portion of the City's retail commercial base. Commercial uses on employment lands are included in the Employment Area analysis.



Figure 31
City of Stratford
Location of Commercial Building Space by Designation
Retail Commercial Gross Leasable Area (G.L.A.) as of 2023



Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

6. Opportunities to Accommodate Growth in Stratford

The following summarizes Stratford's potential to accommodate future housing and employment growth within its designated areas and potential future growth areas. With respect to the City's designated urban residential areas, future residential development opportunities are summarized by active development applications, vacant designated greenfield areas, and intensification opportunities. Consideration has also been given to Stratford's ability to accommodate future non-residential growth on designated commercial and employment lands, as well as through non-residential intensification.

6.1 Housing Supply Potential

The following section assesses Stratford's capacity to accommodate future housing growth, including opportunities for residential intensification. The City has vacant residential units in the form of registered subdivisions (remaining to be built) and subdivisions that are draft approved. In addition, potential units can be accommodated



through residential intensification, primarily infill and longer-term redevelopment opportunities. Stratford also has vacant designated residential lands (i.e., greenfield lands) that can accommodate future housing growth. Housing supply opportunities across the development approvals process, intensification and redevelopment, and greenfield development are discussed below.

6.1.1 Housing Supply in Development Approvals Process

Stratford has approximately 4,190 housing units within the development approvals process (registered unbuilt, draft approved and under review) across the City, as illustrated in Figure 32. This includes 2,195 units in registered plans of subdivision, 850 units in draft approved plans and 1,145 units in draft plans under review. Of the total units in development approvals, 665 units (16%) are low density, 945 units (23%) are medium density, and 2,580 units (62%) are high density.

Figure 32
City of Stratford
Residential Units in Development Approvals

Status	Low Density	Medium Density	High Density	Total
Registered	294	145	1,755	2,194
Draft Approved	343	361	146	850
Plans under Review	26	440	677	1,143
Total	663	946	2,578	4,187

Source: Data provided by the Municipality of City of Stratford (July 2023), presented by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

6.2 Intensification Supply Potential

Stratford has intensification opportunities both through infill and redevelopment, which are identified and assessed from both a physical capacity perspective herein.

Opportunities also exist for further development of second suites within Stratford's single, semi-detached, and townhouse dwelling stock.



As part of the intensification analysis, the Consultant Team has reviewed and updated redevelopment site inventory prepared as part of the City's 2012 Residential Intensification Assessment. Infill lots were also considered and include vacant designated residential lands within the built boundary that are not in the development approvals process. Mapping data, aerial photography, and other existing information sources were used to develop this inventory.

6.2.1 Infill Opportunities

Infill lots include vacant designated residential lands that are not in the development approvals process. Potential infill opportunities were identified and inventoried on a site-by-site basis and further categorized by lot size (i.e., greater or less than 0.4 hectares (1 acre) in size). The net developable areas of each inventoried site were identified based on gross land area less physical and environmental constraints. Redevelopment sites, meanwhile, are those which are currently utilized for non-residential uses (i.e., underutilized industrial and commercial properties, including brownfield sites), but which have the potential to be converted to residential or mixed-use development.

Infill opportunities in Stratford and the corresponding housing unit potential are presented in Figure 33. As shown, it is estimated that 183 housing units could be accommodated on infill lots, including 37 low-density, 30 medium-density and 116 high-density units.

Figure 33
City of Stratford
Potential Infill Supply

Dwelling Unit Potential	Low Density	Medium Density	High Density	Total
Number of Units	37	30	116	183

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.



6.2.2 Redevelopment Opportunities

Redevelopment opportunities in Stratford and the corresponding housing unit potential are presented in Figure 34 under a low-range and high-range scenario adapted and updated from the 2012 Stratford Residential Intensification Assessment. Under the low range scenario, the updated analysis identified a total supply of 805 housing units, while under the high range, the supply potential totals 1,055. Under both scenarios, the majority of housing units are a mix of low- and mid-rise stacked townhouse or low-rise and mid-rise apartment developments, generally with a maximum density of 100 units per net hectare, except for a few exceptions based on current zoning or other factors.

Figure 34
City of Stratford
Redevelopment Supply Potential

Dwelling Unit Potential	Low Density	Medium Density	High Density	Total
Low Range	345	-	455	805
High Range	120	360	570	1,055

Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Source: Derived and updated from 2012 City of Stratford Residential Intensification Assessment by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

6.2.3 Residential Greenfield Development Opportunities

City staff provided the Consultant Team with an inventory of designated urban “greenfield” lands that are currently not active in the development approvals process. Non-developable environmental features (e.g., wetlands, woodlands, and Areas of Natural & Scientific Interest) were removed from the gross land area. Figure 35 identifies that the gross land area (less environmental take-outs) totals 58 hectares (143 acres). A net to gross ratio of 55% was applied to determine the net developable land area of 32 net hectares (79 acres).



Figure 35
City of Stratford
Summary of Greenfield Land Supply (gross to net hectares)

Greenfield Land Supply	Hectares
Gross Greenfield Lands Adjusted for Non-Developable Environmental Features	58
Net Developable Land Area	32

Notes:

- Net to gross ratio of 55% applied after environmental takeouts were applied.
- Environmental takeouts did not include flood-prone and critical floodplain lands.
- Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Derived from data provided by the City of Stratford by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

A more detailed assessment of the housing potential on vacant greenfield lands in Stratford will be prepared in Phase 2 and will include a total estimate of housing unit supply potential on vacant lands once an appropriate density assumption is established.

6.3 Employment Lands Supply

Stratford's vacant employment land inventory was developed based on employment land inventory provided by City staff and using geographic information systems (G.I.S.) based mapping software with various mapping overlays, including O.P. designations and orthophotos. Vacant designated employment lands were identified as those that fall under the O.P. designation of "Industrial." Figure 36 summarizes the total gross and net vacant employment land supply for Stratford (as of 2023). As illustrated, Stratford has a total of 250 gross hectares (618 gross acres) of vacant employment land. In determining the net vacant land inventory, downward adjustments were made to reflect environmentally sensitive lands/environmental features and internal infrastructure (i.e., roads, stormwater ponds, easements, etc.), where applicable.

Larger vacant unsubdivided parcels (i.e., 4 hectares or greater) were subject to an additional downward adjustment to reflect internal infrastructure with a net to gross adjustment of 80%. In accordance with the adjustments for internal infrastructure and



environmentally sensitive/constrained lands, Stratford's net developable employment land supply is estimated at 199 net hectares (492 net acres)

Figure 36
City of Stratford
Vacant Designated Employment Land Supply Gross and Net Hectare

Employment Land Supply	Gross Hectares	Net Hectares
Vacant Designated Employment Lands	250	199

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

Figure 37 summarizes Stratford's total vacant designated employment land supply and shovel-ready employment lands by ownership. As shown, approximately 5% of vacant designated employment land (10 net hectares or 25 net acres) is owned by the City. The remaining 189 net hectares (467 net acres) are privately owned lands located throughout Stratford. Of Stratford's shovel-ready employment lands totalling 54 net hectares (133 net acres), 10 net hectares (25 net acres) are City-owned, accounting for 19% of the total.

Figure 37
City of Stratford
Vacant Employment Lands by Ownership

Vacant Employment Lands	City Owned (Net ha)	Privately Owned (Net ha)	Total (Net ha)	City Owned (%)	Privately Owned (%)	Total (%)
Net Vacant Designated Employment Lands	10	189	199	5%	95%	100%
Shovel-Ready Employment Lands	10	44	54	19%	81%	100%

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

6.3.1 Underutilized Employment Lands

It is anticipated that a share of future employment growth within Stratford may be accommodated within existing developed Employment Areas. Intensification can take a number of forms, including development of underutilized lots (infill), expansion (horizontal or vertical) of existing buildings, and redevelopment of sites.



Intensification offers the potential to accommodate future employment growth and achieve improved land utilization resulting in higher employment density on developed employment lands. Higher land utilization on existing employment lands can also lead to more effective use of existing infrastructure (e.g., roads, water/sewer servicing), a built form that is more conducive to support public transit, resulting in communities that are more functional and complete. Through a high-level desktop review using the developed employment land parcel inventory, building footprints and orthophoto overlays, 82 hectares (203 acres) of Stratford's developed employment lands were identified as underutilized. The underutilized parcels account for 19% of the total developed employment land base in Stratford.

Redevelopment activity has been limited and most of the recent activity has been related to expansion activity of existing businesses. Infill and redevelopment of existing developed lands are expected to continue to gradually increase over time, largely driven by rising employment land values and related development costs, and the continued buildout of Stratford's employment lands, especially in the most marketable locations.

6.4 Commercial/Mixed Use Lands Inventory

Stratford's vacant commercial/mixed-use land inventory was prepared by City staff using G.I.S.-based mapping software with various mapping overlays, including O.P. designations and orthophotos. Vacant designated commercial/mixed-use lands were identified as those that fall under the O.P. designation of "Commercial Area," "Downtown Core," and "Gateway Mixed-Use Area." Figure 38 summarizes the net developable supply of commercial/mixed-use lands. As summarized in Figure 38, the City of Stratford has a very minimal supply of vacant commercial/mixed-uses lands, totalling only 4 hectares. Furthermore, while the City has 20 vacant commercial/mixed-uses sites, the vast majority of the sites measure less than 1 hectare, which limits the opportunities for a range of commercial uses.



Figure 38
City of Stratford
Vacant Designated Commercial/Mixed-Use Lands

Designation	Number of Sites	Number of Sites 1 hectare+	Average Lot Size, hectares	Total Land Area, hectares
Commercial Areas	9	0	0.1	1.3
Downtown Core	10	0	0.1	0.9
Gateway Mixed-Use Area	1	1	2.0	2.0
Total	20	1	0.8	4.2

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2023.

7. Conclusions

The City of Stratford has experienced strong population growth and demand for housing over the past five years. A range of demographic and economic factors is driving this shift, including growth in local employment opportunities, net migration, an aging population, and affordability considerations.

Over the planning horizon, Stratford is anticipated to experience continued growth, building on development trends experienced over the past decade. A broad range of considerations related to demographics, economics, and socio-economics are anticipated to impact future population and employment growth trends throughout Stratford over the 2021 to 2051 planning horizon. These factors will not only affect the rate and magnitude of growth but will also influence the form, density, and location of residential and non-residential development.

This study represents an important background document to the City's O.P. Review exercise. Building on Phase 1, Phase 2 of the study will provide an in-depth analysis of forecast population, employment and housing growth and corresponding urban land needs. Integral to this analysis for the City will be a comprehensive review of how growth will be accommodated through the 2051 planning horizon. This analysis is critical to guiding the timing and amount of future land needs, hard and soft infrastructure requirements, and municipal finance impacts associated with new development.

City of Stratford Official Plan Review

Background Review Report

October 2023

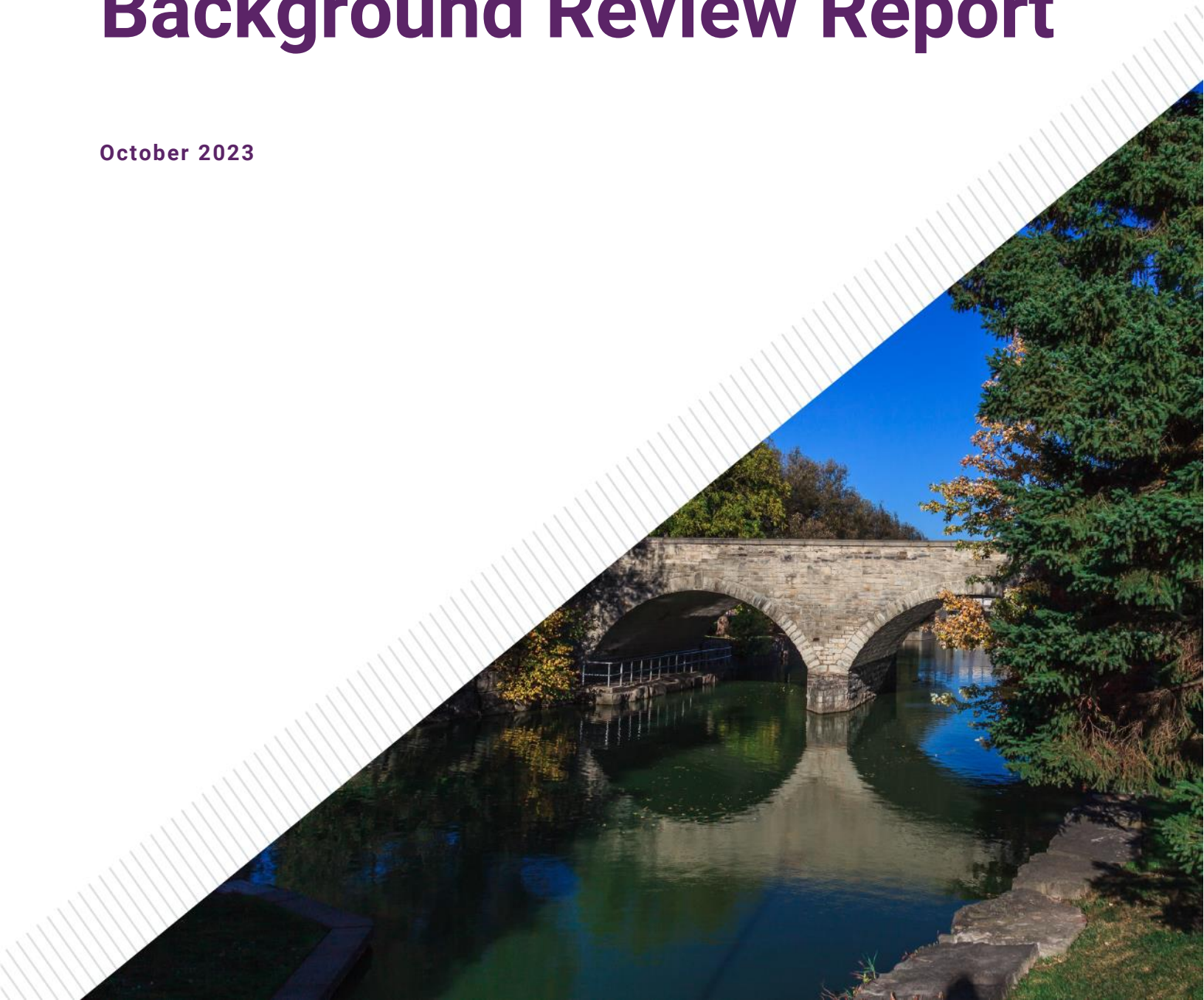


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1 Introduction

As Stratford looks to the future of growth and development in the community, the City has begun the process of reviewing its local land use planning policy document called an Official Plan. The City's current Official Plan has been in place since it was first adopted in 1993 and most recently updated in 2015. Stratford now needs to review its Official Plan to be more strategic and forward-thinking. The process of reviewing an Official Plan is about making choices together as a community, while equipping the City to plan for future change. The Official Plan Review will work to answer several questions towards implementing new policies to support growth:

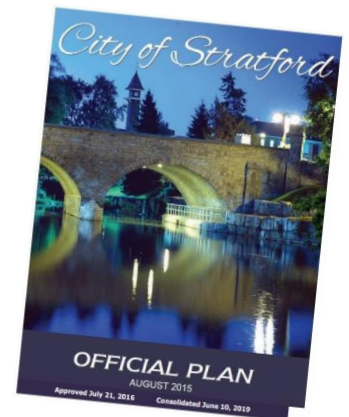


- **How have we grown?**
- **How and where will we grow?**
- **How will the Official Plan guide future growth?**

In Ontario, land use planning involves the process of managing land and resources and guides the City's decisions about where homes, jobs, schools, parks, sewers, and transportation infrastructure are built. The policies contained within an Official Plan define a vision for the future of the City and are used to inform more specific implementation tools such as Zoning By-laws and Community Improvement Plans. They are also informed by other initiatives and Master Plans that the City develops, such as the Transportation Master Plan.

1.1 Background

Stratford's Official Plan contains a series of goals, objectives, and policies that work together to shape development and guide land use planning decisions. In Ontario, the basis for land use planning is established by the Province of Ontario – principally through the *Planning Act* and Provincial Policy Statement. The City is required to conform to or be consistent with the different types of Provincial policies and legislation. Stratford is a single-tier municipality which means that the Province is responsible for approving the City's Official Plan to confirm that it does not conflict with and supports Provincial requirements.



The City of Stratford has retained WSP, in association with Watson & Associates Economists, to complete the Official Plan Review (OPR). The City's last Comprehensive Review was achieved through the approval of OPA 21 that was adopted in December 2015 and approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in June 2016. The *Planning Act* requires that municipalities regularly revise their Official Plans to reflect changing planning legislation and policy. This review also presents an opportunity to address new growth pressures and land needs while considering forward-thinking policies to set the stage for the future of the community.

1.2 Approach & Purpose of this Report

The City's Official Plan Review is a multi-year initiative that began in May 2023 and will span across four phases of work. This Background Report is the first major deliverable in Phase 1 of the Official Plan Review to:

- Review current and emerging Provincial policy direction and legislation that guides land use planning in Ontario;
- Identify key changes and other initiatives completed by the City that will inform updated policies in Stratford;
- Inventory existing policies and key considerations that will inform the project; and
- Document how the City's Official Plan will be reviewed.



Figure 1 - Official Plan Review Thematic Areas

To guide the Official Plan Review, a series of thematic areas have been established based on key areas of change and importance in Stratford. As the project continues, input from the community will inform specific recommendations for each thematic area.

Each phase of the OPR will build on the input received from the community and the technical analyses being undertaken in Phases 1 and 2.

Project Phase

Deliverables & Intended Outcomes

Phase 1

How have we grown?

Background Review Reports

- Develop awareness of the OPR;
- Seek input on the vision and guiding principles;
- Identify a series of ‘big questions’ for the OPR;
- Provide intensification and growth trends, community profiles, and land supply analysis; and
- Document background information and policy gaps.

Phase 2

How will we grow?

Land Needs Assessment & Growth Forecasts

- Determine where and how the City will grow; and
- Identify how many new residents, homes, and jobs need to be planned for by 2048.

Phase 3

How will the Official Plan guide future growth?



Policy Direction Discussion Papers

- Develop policy directions for each thematic policy area based on input received; and
- Propose local solutions to key questions.

Phase 4

Preparing a new Official Plan

Draft & Final Official Plan

- Prepare new Draft Official Plan;
- Complete consultation and engagement to confirm policy changes and directions; and
- Refine the new Official Plan based on input received, prior to bringing changes forward to City Council.

1.3 Engaging the Community

Engagement and consultation will be critical to crafting Stratford’s new Official Plan – one that reflects the aspirations and ideas for the future of Stratford and embraces creative solutions to address local priorities. The following provides an overview of key engagement milestones in each Phase of the OPR.

Project Phase

Engagement Milestones

All Phases

Engage Stratford Webpage

The Engage Stratford webpage will serve as the central location for all information, updates, and documents related to the OPR. Online surveys and other virtual commenting and input opportunities will be hosted on Engage Stratford throughout the OPR.

Phase 1

How have we grown?

Topic: Background Review Reports

- Section 26 Special Meeting of City Council
- Online Visioning Survey / Questionnaire
- City Council Meeting / Workshop

Phase 2

How will we grow?

Topic: Land Needs Assessment & Growth Forecasts

- Online Questionnaire
- City Council Presentation

Phase 3

How will the Official Plan guide future growth?



Topic: Policy Direction Discussion Papers

- Two In-Person Public Open Houses
- City Council Presentations
- Online Questionnaire / Commenting Tool

Phase 4

Preparing a new Official Plan

Topic: Draft & Final Official Plan

- In-Person Statutory Public Open House
- Online Questionnaire / Commenting Tool
- Statutory Public Meeting (City Council)
- Council Adoption

In addition to engagement with the community and stakeholders, consultation with Indigenous communities will play a critical role in shaping the OPR. The OPR presents an opportunity advance reconciliation efforts at the City of Stratford. In Phase 1, the Project Team will conduct outreach to confirm how Indigenous communities want to participate in the OPR in future Phases of the project.

2 Background Review

2.1 Overview

In Ontario, Official Plans are the primary policy tool that municipalities use to shape the land use and form of their communities. The City of Stratford is a single-tier municipality – which means that it is not required to conform to the policies of an upper-tier Official Plan. The policies within the City’s Official Plan are the primary tool for applying Provincial land use legislation and policies. The Official Plan is also informed by other studies (e.g., attainable housing and municipal servicing studies) and functional master plans (e.g., parks and recreation and transportation master plans), and give authority to implementation measures such as the Zoning By-law and community improvement plans.

The purpose of this Section is to identify key Provincial and Local planning documents that will need to be considered in updating Stratford’s Official Plan. Section 3 of this Report then identifies key policy gaps, conflicts, and opportunities that will need to be addressed in response to the matters outlined in this Section.

2.2 Provincial Context

Provincial planning legislation and policies directly influence planning policies in Stratford. This Section outlines these key considerations, as well as key changes to Provincial legislation and policies since the City’s Official Plan was last updated.

2.2.1 Planning Act

The *Planning Act* is the central governing statute for land-use planning in the Province of Ontario, and provides the legal basis for, among other things, the preparation and updating of municipalities’ official plans. Much of what the *Planning Act* governs regarding Official Plans is procedural such as timelines for approval and consultation requirements, but it does prescribe certain components that must be incorporated into an official plan. The *Act* also stipulates that all planning decisions in a municipality, including preparing and updating Official Plans (Section 26), must be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and shall have regard for a list of Provincial interests. These interests include, but are not limited to, the protection of natural heritage, adequate and efficient provision and use of water, transportation, and energy infrastructure, accessibility, and adequate supply of employment and housing.

Since 2015, when the Stratford Official Plan was last updated, the *Planning Act* has been amended multiple times through different pieces of legislation. These key changes include the following:

- **Smart Growth for our Communities Act, 2015 (Bill 73):** made significant amendments to the *Planning Act*, along with changes to the *Development Charges Act*. In broad terms, the reforms introduced by Bill 73 were intended to improve citizen engagement

and the appeals process. Other changes were meant to give municipalities more tools to fund community services and growth.

- **Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016 (Bill 7):** amended the *Planning Act*, authorizing official plans to contain policies for inclusionary zoning, as well as adding various subsections guiding the implementation, assessment, and appeal of inclusionary zoning.
- **Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017 (Bill 139):** significantly reformed the planning appeals process, replacing the Ontario Municipal Board with the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and putting more emphasis on the decisions of planning authorities. Many changes made by Bill 139 were subsequently amended by Bill 108 (see below). Bill 139 also modified Community Planning Permit legislation, which set out an alternative approach to development approval processes in place of zoning and site plan control.
- **More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108):** amended the *Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act* to change the appeals process, and amended the *Planning Act* regarding additional residential units, development charges, and Community Benefits Charges (formerly known as Section 37 Benefits).
- **COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020 (Bill 197):** expanded, in part, the scope of a Minister’s Zoning Order to allow the Minister to make decisions as it relates to site plan control and inclusionary zoning (affordable housing).
- **Supporting Broadband and Infrastructure Expansion Act, 2021 (Bill 257):** amended, in part, the *Planning Act* so that a Minister’s Zoning Order does not have to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. In addition, the changes provide that any existing Minister’s zoning orders, never had to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. The overall purpose of the *Act* is to remove barriers to help ensure the deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure.
- **More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022 (Bill 109):** made significant amendments to the *Planning Act*. New subsections were added that introduce a refunding regime for planning application fees if municipalities fail to render a decision on an application within certain timeframes. This bill also introduced a new ministerial zoning tool known as the ‘Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator (CIHA).
- **More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23):** introduced broad changes to the land use planning regime in Ontario, with immediate amendments to the *Planning Act*, *Development Charges Act*, *Conservation Authorities Act*, *Ontario Land Tribunal Act*, and the *Ontario Heritage Act*, as well as proposals and direction for making further changes to natural heritage policies, developing a new Provincial planning policy framework, and the development of standardized tools for zoning.
- **Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023 (Bill 97):** amended the definition of “area of employment” in the *Planning Act* to include lands designated for

manufacturing, warehousing and ancillary uses, but to exclude institutional, retail, and office uses. The intent of this change is to preserve employment lands for those uses that are unable to locate in the community area – while encouraging compatible uses such as office and institutional to integrate into the community area.

While some of these recent changes do not directly affect the policies to be included in an Official Plan, they provide important context related to planning and development in Ontario and should be considered as the Stratford Official Plan is reviewed and updated.

2.2.2 Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and Proposed Provincial Planning Statement (2023)

While the *Planning Act* defines matters of provincial interest, the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS 2020) provides policy direction on these matters. The PPS 2020 sets the foundation for Ontario's policy-led planning system and its direction is implemented through municipal Official Plans. Since 2015, when Stratford's Official Plan was last updated, the Provincial Policy Statement has been revised two times. The PPS 2020 is currently in-effect, but it is anticipated to be replaced by a new "Provincial Planning Statement" (PPS 2023) in late 2023 or early 2024. The preliminary implications of the Provincial Planning Statement have been considered in the context of this Report. The ultimate implications of the approved Provincial Planning Statement will be reviewed and considered as the Official Plan Review progresses.

The following key changes were introduced in the PPS 2020, and are proposed to be kept in the proposed PPS 2023:

- **Land Supply:** municipalities are required to plan for a 25-year horizon, instead of 20 years.
- **Housing:** municipalities are required to plan for accommodating residential growth for a minimum of 15 years, instead of 10. There is a new requirement for transit-supportive development in proximity to transit corridors and stations.
- **Intensification:** there is an increased emphasis on planning for intensification and transit supported development to achieve cost-effective growth.
- **Servicing:** stormwater planning is to be integrated with water and sanitary service planning, and impact of individual on-site servicing to be reviewed at the time of an Official plan update.
- **Employment and Land Use Compatibility:** strengthening of policy language guiding the development of major facilities and sensitive land uses, and the addition of policies to protect existing and planned industrial and manufacturing uses from encroachment.
- **Flexibility around Comprehensive Reviews:** the in-effect PPS 2020 allows for conversions of employment areas to non-employment *outside* of a comprehensive review under certain circumstances. The proposed PPS 2023 would go further and entirely remove the requirement for employment conversions to occur at the time of the comprehensive review.

- **Settlement Area Boundary Expansions:** The PPS 2020 allowed municipalities to adjust settlement area boundaries outside of a comprehensive review, under certain circumstances. The proposed PPS 2023 would go further and allow settlement area boundary expansions to occur at any time.
- **Indigenous consultation:** planning authorities are required to engage meaningfully with Indigenous communities on land use planning matters and build cooperative relationships to share knowledge in land-use planning processes.

2.2.3 Supplementary Agricultural Guidelines to the Provincial Policy Statement

In 2016, the Province published two sets of guidelines to assist municipalities in implementing the agricultural policies of the Provincial Policy Statement: the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas and the Minimum Distance Separation Formulae Document. These documents are not regulations or policies of themselves but provide additional information and tools to clarify the policies of the PPS. In Stratford, areas in the west and northeast of the City are designated "Agricultural Area" on Schedule "A" and Section 4.12 sets out policies for Agricultural Areas.

The Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas provide guidance on agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses described in Policy 2.3.3 of the PPS. The Guidelines also clarify the allowance for limited non-agricultural uses in prime agricultural areas, as well as the mitigation of impacts from new or expanding non-agricultural uses.

The Minimum Distance Separation Document outlines in more detail the Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae defined in the PPS, and provides technical guidance for implementing the MDS formula, which mitigates or prevents land-compatibility issues surrounding high-odour uses like livestock facilities or anaerobic digesters. Official plans are required to have up-to-date policies around MDS requirements.

2.2.4 Land Use Compatibility

The PPS 2020 provides direction to municipalities on land use compatibility. It requires major facilities and sensitive land uses to be planned in a way that avoids, minimizes, or mitigates adverse effects from odour, noise and other contaminants. New policies were added in 2020 to provide criteria for how to plan developments where avoidance is not possible.

Where the PPS 2020 provides general direction regarding land use compatibility, it is implemented through the Province's D-Series guidelines that provide specific direction for municipalities to follow when deciding whether a new development or land use is appropriate in any given location.

2.2.5 Conservation Authorities

Conservation Authorities (CAs) are public sector organizations that provide programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural

resources in watersheds in Ontario. Conservation Authorities are governed under the *Conservation Authorities Act*, which is administered by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP).

Conservation Authorities review and provide advice to municipalities in accordance with the *Act* and its regulations, including commenting on applications with respect to natural hazard risk policies, wetlands and source protection related matters. The City of Stratford is located in the jurisdiction of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA). Under the *Act*, UTRCA regulates development and interference to wetlands and alteration to shorelines and watercourses through the issuance of permits within its jurisdiction. The UTRCA regulated area screening maps was last updated in December 2021.

2.2.6 Source Water Protection

The Provincial government passed the *Clean Water Act*, 2006 to protect existing and future sources of municipal drinking water throughout Ontario. A key deliverable required under the *Act* is a source water protection plan, which is undertaken to:

- Protect existing and future drinking water sources in the source protection area; and
- Ensure that activities never become a threat in every area where an activity is or would be a threat to drinking water.

The City of Stratford is located in the Thames – Sydenham Source Protection Region and the City's Official Plan is required to conform with the policies of the Source Protection Plan (SPP) for this Region. The Thames – Sydenham SPP was approved in September 2015 and has not been modified since that date. The City's previous comprehensive review (OPA 21) worked to ensure that the policies of the Official Plan conformed with the SPP. It is not anticipated that there will be significant modifications needed to maintain conformity with the SPP.

Examples of policies from Thames and Sydenham Region Source Protection Plan include:

- **Restricting Land Use:** Under Section 59 of the *Clean Water Act*, Development applications or activities which may be considered a clean water threat may be subject to restricted land use and other conditions. Official restrictions can be implemented through policies and/or regulations in the *Planning Act*, Official Plans, Zoning By-laws, and Site Plan Control.
- **Requiring Risk Management Plans:** Under Section 58 of the *Clean Water Act*, activities may be regulated, and a Risk Management Plan will be required before proceeding.
- **Supporting Education and Outreach Programs:** Engage the public and key stakeholders to raise awareness and understanding of drinking water threats as well as the Source Protection Plan and why it is significant for residents.

2.3 Local Context

While provincial legislation and policy can provide a high-level framework to guide development in Stratford, more specific local direction is provided by the Official Plan and various local studies, strategies and Master Plans.

2.3.1 City of Stratford Strategic Plan

In 2019, Stratford City Council adopted a statement of the City's mission, vision, and values, along with a document outlining the Council's Strategic Priorities for the 2018-2022 term. City Council has recently commenced the process for establishing Strategic Priorities for the 2022-2026 term, which will be reviewed and incorporated if they are finalized during the course of the Official Plan Review.

The City's **Mission Statement** is:

"To provide services to support a sustainable, caring community with exceptional quality of life."

The City's **Vision Statement** is to become:

"A vibrant city, leading the way in community-driven excellence."

In addition, the results from the 2018-2022 strategic priorities could be referenced to inform the Official Plan Review. These include:

- 1) More sufficient year-round parking
- 2) A safe, connected active transportation network
- 3) Further activating Market Square
- 4) Increasing affordable housing
- 5) Bringing new industrial land to market
- 6) Increasing residential development at all levels of affordability

2.3.2 Stratford Official Plan

Stratford's Official Plan is a powerful tool that the City can leverage to express its vision for the future, and to implement the necessary land use controls that will help to achieve that vision. Stratford's 2015 Official Plan will be the baseline document that will inform the new Official Plan. It will be necessary to critically analyze and evaluate the performance of the existing Official Plan policies and structure.

The existing vision statement in the Stratford Official Plan is "to be the best place to live, work, and play". This general statement is common across many planning policies throughout Ontario. A new vision that reflects the uniqueness of Stratford and espouses a specific vision for the City may be developed through the Official Plan Review. The guiding principles that follow the vision

statement are high level and may be updated to provide a unique sense of direction for the future of the City.

Through the OPR, the City will be able to identify issues that are going to affect the future of Stratford such as population growth, housing supply and climate change adaptation. A future-focused vision statement and Official Plan policies will speak directly to these issues and offer sufficient direction to manage challenges while contributing to long term growth objectives.

In addition to updating the vision and corresponding policies of the OP, this review creates an opportunity to re-visit the structure of the and consider changes to streamline and improve the readability of the document. The City of Stratford's existing Official Plan has a traditional structure and layout that includes text-heavy chapters and minimal use of visual elements such as diagrams and photographs. A more "user-friendly" Official Plan can help users (e.g., residents, developers and elected officials) to better understand the City's goals and contribute to the City's vision.

2.3.3 Official Plan Amendments

The City's Official Plan has been amended ten times since the last comprehensive review and the adoption of OPA 21 in order to address site-specific matters.

Many of the amendments since 2016 have sought to increase the allowable density on specific parcels within the city (e.g., OPA 32 redesignated lands on the corner of Queensland Road and Lorne Avenue West from 'Residential Area' to 'High Density Residential Area', allowing a maximum height of six storeys and 100 units per net hectare). Recent amendments represent a trend towards greater density within the urban boundary. This trend will be considered as part of the OPR.

If the decision is made to prepare an entirely new Official Plan that would repeal and replace the in-effect OP, the content of all previous OPAs will be reviewed and integrated into the new document, as appropriate.

2.3.4 Secondary Plans

Secondary Plans are area-specific amendments to the Official Plan which provide more detailed direction and a focused vision for a particular neighbourhood or district within the City. There are two in-effect Secondary Plans in the City of Stratford, contained in Sections 11.1 and 11.2:

- 1) North East Community Secondary Plan
- 2) Stratford West Secondary Plan

The approach to reviewing existing Secondary Plans is detailed in Section 4.3 of this Report.

2.3.5 Transportation Master Plan

The City of Stratford is currently updating its Transportation Master Plan (TMP) that is intended to guide the management of driving, walking, cycling and transit in the city. The draft TMP

Report was presented to City Council on August 14, 2023 and a Notice of Completion was published on August 15, 2023.

The TMP is a long-term strategy that “identifies transportation infrastructure investment needed to help meet the City’s community-building objectives and support growth through 2041.” The goals of the Transportation Master Plan are closely related to the vision of the Official Plan and the documents work closely together.

The values that guide the TMP include:

- 1) Enable safe movement for residents, visitors, and goods.
- 2) Contribute to building healthy and complete communities.
- 3) Plan for an efficient, reliable, and inter-connected multi-modal transportation network.
- 4) Plan for accessibility and equity and ensure that the transportation system meets the mobility needs of all residents and their travel modes.
- 5) Assess recommendations through a climate change lens, with an eye towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The City’s TMP identifies effective land use planning as a key support that will be needed to achieve its goals. The TMP provides the following directions for the new Official Plan:

- **Mixed uses:** Building complete communities with a mix of uses and amenities means a higher proportion of trips can be made within shorter distances with a higher probability of walking trips.
- **Site planning:** Narrow frontages encourage more variety and increase the attractiveness of walking. Smaller lots also help to locate more people and services close to one another.
- **Parking requirements:** A reduction or elimination of minimum parking requirements for new developments will allow for market-driven decisions on the supply of off-street parking.
- **Provision of active transportation facilities:** Sidewalks, trails and cycling facilities should be provided as per the typical characteristics outlined in the functional street classification framework. New neighbourhoods should seamlessly integrate cycling facilities into the existing and recommended networks.
- **Pedestrian walksheds:** Street networks should be designed to maximize pedestrian convenience. Traditionally, a fixed grid provides the most efficient layout for pedestrians.
- **Preventative traffic calming:** Streets should be designed originally to encourage slower traffic speeds, eliminating the need for retrofit traffic calming applications.

The OPR will align with the direction and recommendations set out in the TMP and support implementation of its vision for the future of transportation in Stratford.

2.3.6 Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines

The City's most recent Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines are from 2014 and conform to the Official Plan that was in-effect at that time. They contain direction for both the public realm and private realm. The guiding principles include a focus on sustainable development, protecting and enhancing the city's natural environment, and encouraging appropriate intensification and mixed-use development. The entirety of the guidelines can be considered when trying to understand the broader vision for the city.

2.3.7 Growth Management

As part of the City's comprehensive review in 2015, growth forecasts were prepared to 2033. These forecasts will need to be updated to 2048 and reflect new assumptions about growth trends in the city and broader region. The updated forecasts will be used to inform a Land Needs Assessment to determine how much additional land (if any) will be needed to accommodate growth for the next 25 years. Watson & Associates will be preparing the updated city-wide population, housing and employment forecasts in Phase 2 of the OPR.

2.3.8 Development Charges Background Study

The City of Stratford updated its Development Charges By-law in 2022 and prepared a corresponding Background Study. The Background Study was prepared by Watson & Associates and contained forecasts for population, households and non-residential gross floor area.

The City is required to Plan for the development that is anticipated by these growth forecasts, and to confirm that services are available for the forecast growth. The Official Plan review will undertake an assessment of the City's land needs based on population and employment growth forecasts. If there is an identified need for additional land to the horizon of the Official Plan, the review exercise will identify the most appropriate locations for expansion.

2.3.9 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys

The 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys was released in 2014 and most recently updated in 2020. An analysis of demographic and socio-economic data undertaken as part of the update showed that there was an increase in the proportion of households on low-income (from 10.1% in 2011 to 11.1% in 2016), and that overall income levels in the area were below provincial medians. Conversely, housing costs for both rental and ownership have increased in that period, and the availability of rental units has decreased. These combined factors highlight the urgent need for strong policies related to housing, that is shared across many municipalities in Ontario.

The updated plan lists four strategic objectives for 2020-2024:

- 1) **Ending Homelessness:** The plan focuses on chronic homelessness and commits to shifting resources away from managing to ending homelessness in line with the provincial goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

- 2) **Creating Attainable Housing Options:** The plan recommends leveraging municipal, provincial, and federal funding sources to create more attainable housing options. It also recommends collaborating with municipal and economic development partners to develop incentives for building attainable housing.
- 3) **Sustaining Community Housing:** The plan seeks to build capacity in the community housing sector, which could involve enhancing providers' capacity for purchasing, capital planning and regeneration of housing stock.
- 4) **Addressing a Diversity of Needs:** The plan highlights the fact that certain population groups are more vulnerable to instability and are at greater risk of losing their housing. It commits to building partnerships with organizations that work directly with vulnerable population groups and improving the understanding of the needs of different users who are navigating the housing and homelessness system.

The development of housing and the creation of attainable housing options are inextricably linked to land use planning. The existing Official Plan broadly speaks about the need to encourage the integration of affordable housing with the wide housing market. The Official Plan review presents an opportunity to introduce definitive targets and strategies related to development proposals and the provision of affordable housing.

2.3.10 Heritage Conservation District

The City's downtown area is designated as a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The City of Stratford derives a great deal of its character and tourist potential from the uniqueness and historical significance of its downtown. The HCD allows the City to control and protect the heritage attributes of the area.

The existence of the HCD should not be interpreted to mean that no intensification can occur in the area. It is important to consider the need for growth and development in this district in order to support the continued vitality of the city's downtown, while respecting the heritage conservation district standards that have been developed.

This OPR will consider how gentle density can be accommodate in the HCD in order to meet the updated requirements of the *Planning Act* that allow a minimum of three residential units per lot.

2.3.11 Perth County Natural Heritage System Study

The Perth County Natural Heritage System Study (PNHSS) evaluates the existing natural heritage resources within the County, including within the City of Stratford. It provides guidance to local municipalities when determining the significance of features. The study is focused on using a science-based approach to identify natural heritage features and areas in order to support the implementation of other policies.

The Natural Heritage System shown in the Stratford Official Plan will be informed by the updated PNHSS and the most recent mapping. Following a municipal boundary adjustment in 2020, approximately 130 ha of new lands in the south-west corner of the city near Highway 7 and Line

29 now fall within the municipal boundary of the City of Stratford. These lands contain patches of vegetation that meet the PNHSS criteria to be considered ecologically important and will need to be documented accordingly in the new Official Plan.

The PNHSS report and mapping were most recently updated in 2019 using newer aerial photography from 2015. Any changes to the mapping as a result of the updated data source will need to be considered during the Official Plan Review.

2.4 Summary of Inputs, Documents, and Other Drivers

Since the Stratford Official Plan was last updated in 2015, significant Provincial policy and legislative changes have occurred. The City has also advanced its own planning and updated various strategies and initiatives. This Official Plan Review must give consideration to the updated provincial and local direction as it develops a vision for future land use in the city.

The most notable provincial changes are the various amendments to the *Planning Act*, the 2020 update of Provincial Policy Statement and draft 2023 Provincial Planning Statement, which could replace the PPS 2020 during this review.

On a local level, the recently adopted Transportation Master Plan provides significant direction for the Official Plan Review. The Transportation Master Plan depends on land use planning policy to help develop complete communities where a multi-modal transportation network can provide citizens with a range of options for both local and regional movement. This vision aligns with general provincial direction to promote intensification, integrate land use and infrastructure planning, and leverage investments in public transit. Together, the various Provincial and local documents provide a strong basis from which to update the Official Plan.

3 Policy Gaps, Conflicts, and Opportunities

The purpose of Section 3 is to identify the major policy gaps, opportunities for new policies, and potential conflicts between the City's current Official Plan and emerging or recent Provincial and broader regional policy or initiatives (e.g., Perth County and adjacent municipalities), as well as other City-led master plans and studies. This section builds on the background review completed in Section 2.

3.1 Policy Review

Table 1 characterizes the existing policy of the Stratford Official Plan, identifies the key issue, conflict or gap, and summarizes the key policy and legislative drivers and resources to address this issue, conflict, or gap. Through this process, the project team will develop a list of priority policy changes and issues to be discussed further with the Province and agencies.

The table is organized by chapter of the City's Official Plan. Further gaps and opportunities may be identified and added through the final iteration of this Report, and through future Discussion Papers. This second report will build upon this table to propose policy directions for each of the issues, conflicts, and gaps identified in **Table 1**.

For convenience purposes, the following is a list of acronyms used in the analysis:

- PPS 2020 means the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020
- PPS 2023 means the proposed draft Provincial Planning Statement, 2023
- SOP means the Stratford Official Plan, 2010

The issues, conflicts, or gaps identified fall into one of three categories:

- Issues, conflicts or gaps that **must** be addressed to conform to or implement Provincial policies;
- Issues, conflicts or gaps that **should** be addressed to implement best and emerging practices; and
- Issues, conflicts or gaps that **could** be addressed to be innovative or respond to the local context in Stratford.

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Table 1 - Policy Issues, Conflicts, and Opportunities Assessment

Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
Chapter 1: Introduction			
Land Acknowledgement	New	The Official Plan should include an acknowledgement of the traditional rights and territories of Indigenous peoples in the area.	PPS 2020 Current Official Plan best practices
Purpose	This Chapter generally explains that the Official Plan is designed to establish a vision for the city regarding the type of community desired. This over-arching vision is then used to inform the desired form, pattern and intensity of land use.	This purpose of this Chapter is to broadly explain the role of the SOP in guiding land use and achieving the objectives of the City. There is an opportunity to refresh the objectives set out in Section 1.1. Section 16 of the <i>Planning Act</i> defines the contents required to be contained in an official plan.	<i>Planning Act</i>
Growth Management	Section 1.3 notes that the planning period extends to 2033. Section 1.4 notes that the Stratford Official Plan is “consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement which came into effect on March 1, 2005”.	The PPS, 2005 has been superseded by the PPS, 2020 which is currently in effect. The PPS, 2020 is proposed to be replaced with a “Provincial Planning Statement” (PPS 2023) that is currently in draft form. Policies in the revised Official Plan will need to be consistent with the PPS 2020, as well as the	PPS 2020 <i>Planning Act</i>



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Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
		<p>PPS 2023 when it comes into effect.</p> <p>The planning period will need to be extended to 2048.</p> <p>Section 2 of the <i>Planning Act</i> defines matters of provincial interest related to land-use planning.</p> <p>The PPS 2020 provides policy direction on the matters of provincial interest.</p> <p>Section 3(5) of the <i>Planning Act</i> directs planning authorities to make decisions related to planning matters that are consistent with the PPS.</p>	
Chapter 2: Vision and Guiding Principles			
Guiding Principles	It is noted that the vision and guiding principles in Chapter 2 “are not to be interpreted as direct statements of planning policy”.	Despite the disclaimer, the content of Chapter 2 can be used to provide additional context or assist with the interpretation of specific policies within the Official Plan.	The Stratford Official Plan is to be read in its entirety, according as confirmed by Section 1.7 of the existing OP. The Ontario Land Tribunal has referred to preambles in its decisions.
Vision	The broad vision of the existing Stratford Official Plan is to develop a complete community	The guiding principles reflect the matters of provincial interest and	One of the matters of provincial interested listed in Section 2 of the <i>Planning Act</i> is “the adequate provision



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Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	<p>that meets all the residents' needs for daily living.</p> <p>This entails maintaining a diverse economy, ensuring that transportation, infrastructure, and community services meet the needs of users of all ages and abilities, and protecting natural heritage and agriculture.</p>	<p>broadly match the direction of the PPS 2020.</p> <p>It is recommended to also include guiding principles related to the thematic areas of the OPR, including housing, climate action, and sustainability. Overall, the vision and guiding principles will be reviewed and confirmed with the community.</p>	<p>of a full range of housing, including affordable housing".</p> <p>Recent provincial planning direction has focused heavily on the provision of housing – this should be more directly addressed in the guiding principles of the Official Plan.</p>
Guiding Principles	<p>Many of the guiding principles are written using language that is not sufficiently directive or definitive.</p> <p>For example, 2.3 (xii) seeks to "encourage the continuation of agriculture and associated uses and discourage these areas from premature redevelopment."</p>	<p>Open-ended language does not provide clear policy direction and leaves room for policies to be challenged and interpreted.</p> <p>PPS 2023 directs that "prime agricultural areas shall be designated and protected for long-term use for agriculture."</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>
Guiding Principles	<p>Section 2.3 (vi) seeks to "encourage appropriate intensification and infill, including mixed use development, which reflects the existing context of the city with respect to factors such as height and design."</p>	<p>Current and proposed provincial direction on intensification focuses on the need to efficiently use land and resources, as well as optimize investments in infrastructure (e.g., by promoting opportunities for transit-supportive development).</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
		Including factors such as 'existing context', 'height and design' in the guiding principle related to intensification potentially weakens the overall policy direction and does not match the direction of the PPS.	
Chapter 3: General Policy Directions			
Growth Management	<p>Section 3.2.1 provides population and employment forecasts to 2033.</p> <p>It includes a target for the city's housing mix to 2033.</p>	<p>Updated population and employment forecasts, as well as a corresponding land needs assessment are being prepared as part of this Official Plan Review.</p> <p>These documents will be required to consider the land needs of the City of Stratford to 2048 (25-year planning horizon).</p> <p>The in-effect PPS 2020 and proposed PPS 2023 both require municipalities to make sufficient land available to accommodate projected land needs for a time horizon of 25 years.</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>
Intensification	Section 3.2.2 establishes an intensification target of 25% and	The existing intensification target is low compared to similar sized cities in Ontario.	PPS 2020 notes that "planning authorities shall ... accommodate a significant supply and range of housing



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	<p>proposes strategies to achieve the target.</p> <p>The existing intensification strategies are focused on encouraging intensification in commercial areas on arterial roads, including the use of Community Improvement Plans to promote intensification in these areas.</p> <p>Policies such as 3.5.8 related to Heritage Areas and Heritage Corridors as shown on Schedule “E” can create extra barriers to housing and limit the amount intensification that occurs in existing Residential Areas. These policies should be reviewed in light of recent provincial direction on intensification and the need to achieve the City’s intensification target.</p>	<p>Information on the city’s annual intensification rate from 2016 will be reviewed to determine if the current rate is being achieved or if the strategies need to be modified.</p> <p>Policies that speak to permitting only “limited intensification of Residential Areas of a scale and built form which reflects the surrounding area” can create obstacles to intensification. Such policies do not align with provincial direction that has promoted intensification and removing barriers to adding density in existing neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>options through intensification and redevelopment...”</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023 directs planning authorities to permit and facilitate “all types of residential intensification, including the conversion of existing commercial and institutional buildings for residential use, development and introduction of new housing options within previously developed areas”</p>
Employment Conversions	<p>Section 3.2.4 specifies that the City may permit the conversion of lands in the “Industrial Area” only at the time of comprehensive review”</p>	<p>The existing SOP policy is consistent with PPS 2020 but does not align with proposed direction in PPS 2023.</p> <p>The proposed PPS 2023 aims to make more land available for development and provide</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p> <p>It should be noted that a municipality can still refuse to approve privately initiated OPAs dealing with the removal of land from employment areas, and such a</p>

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Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
		<p>greater flexibility for municipalities by removing the concept of the <i>comprehensive review</i>.</p> <p>If the proposed PPS 2023 goes into effect as written, municipalities will have the option to consider the conversion of lands in employment areas any time.</p>	<p>refusal cannot be appealed at the Ontario Land Tribunal if the municipality has official plan policies dealing with the removal of land from employment areas [<i>Planning Act</i> s.22(7.3)].</p>
Urban Boundary	<p>Section 3.2.5 notes that future expansions of the City Boundary may only occur as part of a comprehensive review and when specific criteria have been met to demonstrate the need for additional lands in the settlement area.</p>	<p>The existing policies are generally consistent with PPS 2020. However, PPS 2020 allows a municipality to also consider the market demand for different types of housing when evaluating their projected land needs to the planning horizon.</p> <p>The proposed PPS 2023 would remove the comprehensive review process and allow municipalities to consider adding lands to their settlement area at any time.</p> <p>Further, there is a need to consider any policy changes that may be required for newly annexed lands in Stratford.</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
Housing	<p>The housing policies in Chapter 3 of the SOP aim to provide “a full range of housing choices ... in terms of tenure, form and affordability for current and future residents” (3.4.1).</p> <p>The SOP sets at target of having 25% of new units “constructed within the affordability limits applicable to [the] regional market area” [3.4.1 (vi)]</p>	<p>The existing policies are consistent with PPS 2020 which directs planning authorities to establish and implement minimum targets for the provision of affordable housing.</p> <p>The proposed PPS 2023 removes the direction to establish minimum targets for affordable housing as well as the definition of “affordable”. Instead, it directs planning authorities to coordinate with service managers under the <i>Housing Services Act</i> to address housing affordability needs.</p> <p>The streamlined direction in the proposed PPS 2023 would not prevent the City of Stratford from maintaining and updating its target for the provision of affordable housing in the Official Plan.</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p> <p>Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys</p>
Growth Management	<p>The SOP commits that the City will maintain the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 10 years through opportunities for intensification and lands</p>	<p>The PPS 2020 and the proposed PPS 2023 both require municipalities to plan for a 15-year residential land supply.</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	designated and available for residential development.		
Chapter 4: Land Use Strategy			
Downtown	<p>The SOP defines a community structure with a traditional ‘Downtown Core’ at the centre, surrounded by older residential neighbourhoods with newer residential areas located on the periphery of the City.</p> <p>It is noted that newer large-scale retail development has been concentrated along the arterial roads outside the Downtown Core, and this has contributed to the prominence of the Downtown “being eroded over recent years”.</p> <p>The SOP notes that “the supply, cost and convenience of parking in the ‘Downtown Core’, both on-street and off-street, is considered a vital element to its continued economic health.</p>	<p>The PPS 2020 does not provide specific direction on community structure or a hierarchy of land uses, but there is an emphasis on promoting intensification in order to efficiently use land and resources as well as sufficient densities to support transit service (1.1.3.2).</p> <p>The existing goals and objectives the downtown core focus on encouraging compact development as well as a diversity of uses. These are consistent with the PPS.</p> <p>The emphasis on maintaining and increasing (where feasible) the supply of parking in the Downtown Core is potentially inconsistent with PPS policies that direct municipalities to plan for an efficient use of land and resources.</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>



City of Stratford Official Plan Review
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Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
Commercial	<p>Section 4.7 establishes policies for Commercial Areas, including permitted uses and the form of development.</p> <p>Section 4.13 sets out policies for the Gateway Mixed Use Areas, which were brought about by the annexation of these lands from the Township of Perth East.</p>	<p>There is an opportunity to confirm the applicability of the Commercial designation and whether a new “Mixed Use designation” should be introduced, which contemplates at-grade commercial uses with residential uses permitted on the upper storeys.</p> <p>The Gateway Mixed Use Area designation could then be consolidated with the rest of the City and serve as the basis for the new general designation.</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Land Needs Assessment</p>
Residential	<p>Policies around stable residential areas set specific criteria for new development in order to match the scale and design of the existing neighbourhoods. It is recognized that any intensification in these areas will be modest and incremental.</p>	<p>Section 4.5.3.1 – ‘Stable Residential Areas’ creates barriers to intensification in these areas and makes it more challenging to meet the City’s intensification target of 25%.</p> <p>Moreover, considering that Stable Residential Areas are adjacent to the Downtown Core, these policies potentially impede the ability of the City to attract more residents to the Core and support the vibrancy and diversity of businesses.</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
Additional Residential Units	<p>Table 1 in Section 4.3 describes land uses that are permitted in all designations.</p> <p>It notes that second suites may be permitted in residential units if there is no garden suite on the same lot.</p> <p>Similarly, it notes that a garden suite may be permitted on the same lot as a residential dwelling, but this would preclude a second suite from being permitted in the principal dwelling.</p> <p>These existing policies allow a maximum of two residential units per lot.</p>	<p>Changes introduced to the <i>Planning Act</i> by Bill 23 – “More Homes Built Faster Act” require that all Official Plans permit a minimum of three residential units per lot (e.g., two suites in the main dwelling & garden suite, or three suites in the main dwelling).</p> <p>The SOP policies do not meet the new requirements of the <i>Planning Act</i> that were introduced by Bill 23 and came into force on November 28, 2022.</p> <p>Considering these changes to Provincial legislation which allow up to three units on a residential lot, there is an opportunity to re-classify triplexes as a low-density residential use.</p>	<p>Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster <i>Planning Act</i></p>
Employment	<p>SOP policies around Industrial Areas seek to encourage the continued development of Stratford as a manufacturing and regional industrial service centre.</p> <p>The City protects employment areas in proximity to major</p>	<p>The secondary uses permitted in the City’s ‘Industrial Areas’ include institutional uses, office uses not considered by the City to be appropriate for location in the Downtown Core, and</p>	<p>Bill 97 changes the definition of “Area of Employment” in the <i>Planning Act</i>, and specifically notes that “institutional uses, retail uses, and office uses are not considered part of an Area of Employment. It should be noted that this definition change will take effect upon proclamation. This will likely be timed to</p>



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Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	<p>goods movement facilities and corridors, in line with provincial direction.</p> <p>Existing policies also permit institutional, office, research and some educational uses in Industrial areas.</p>	<p>education and training uses other than elementary schools.</p> <p>Bill 97 changed the definition of “Employment Areas”, which has been mirrored in the proposed PPS 2023. These two documents signal the provincial government’s direction to incorporate office, retail and institutional uses into mixed-use areas in order to preserve industrial areas for specific industries and land uses that cannot locate elsewhere.</p> <p>As part of this Official Plan Review, the City will be required to review land uses permitted in the “Industrial Area” designation to ensure that it matched provincial direction.</p>	<p>coincide with the release of the final PPS 2023.</p>
Agriculture	<p>Agricultural Area policies in the SOP are directed at recent annexations that have brought agricultural land into the City limits.</p> <p>Non-intensive agricultural uses are encouraged.</p>	<p>New lot creation is discouraged on designated agricultural areas. This is consistent with PPS 2020.</p> <p>It will be necessary to review any final policies released in the PPS 2023 and consider how they can affect development on lands</p>	<p>PPS 2020</p> <p>Proposed PPS 2023</p>



City of Stratford Official Plan Review
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Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	The SOP aims to prevent the premature redevelopment of the annexed agricultural lands.	currently designated for agriculture. The Official Plan Review can consider phasing requirements or “future-area” overlays on these areas in order to ensure the orderly development of these lands.	
Factory District	Section 4.9 – Factory District Area notes that proposals to covert former industrial buildings will be encouraged. These conversions will not require a comprehensive review.	While conversions to non-industrial uses appear to be encouraged, there is a lack of vision for the future of the area or the desired built form. Moreover, there is a reference to encouraging stability and avoiding “piecemeal conversion to industrial uses”. This section needs to be clear if there is an expectation for industrial uses to return to this area or if the type of land available in the factory district is no longer appropriate for industrial uses and should be re-designated accordingly.	General need to provide more detail and vision in order to guide potential development applications.
Development Density	Section 4.5 establishes density ranges for low and medium density residential development.	There is a need to review and update density targets set out in the SOP. The City has historically seen significant	PPS 2020



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
		greenfield development; however, as the City shifts to more intensification these densities should reflect more contemporary development forms and facilitate infill.	
Chapter 5: Environment and Sustainability Strategy			
Natural Heritage System	This chapter generally describes the framework for protecting natural heritage features as well as the role of the UTRCA in regulating lands that pose a flooding or erosion hazard.	<p>The general approach of the existing SOP is built around protecting natural heritage features (a feature-based approach).</p> <p>In addition to protecting features, the PPS directs municipalities to identify natural heritage systems and protect connectivity between features (a systems-based approach).</p> <p>While the City might not have identified many features, there is an opportunity to recognize the significance to the Avon River as a connection between key areas.</p>	PPS 2020
Natural System	Section 5.3 Natural Hazards generally defers to the UTRCA to determine the regulation limit of where natural hazards exist and	While Bill 23 significantly reduced the role and scope of Conservation Authorities in reviewing and approving	Bill 23 – <i>More Homes Built Faster Act</i>



City of Stratford Official Plan Review
Background Review Report

Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	where corresponding policies apply.	development proposals, the regulation of development in the floodplain remains within their jurisdiction. It will be important to follow any new developments in this area to ensure consistency with the most recent provincial direction regarding the role of Conservation Authorities.	
Water Resources	Section 5.4 – Water Resources is succinct and defers to the Thames – Sydenham Source Protection Plan. It notes that all planning decisions shall be in conformity with the SPP. Vulnerable areas are shown on the SOP Schedules.	There is an opportunity to identify key policies of the Source Protection Plan direction in the SOP. This allows readers to understand the broad requirements of the SPP before having to review the SPP.	<i>Clean Water Act, 2001</i> Thames – Sydenham Source Protection Plan
Chapter 6: Community Design Strategy			
Urban Design	The Section on Community Design highlights the goal for new and existing neighbourhoods to become “sustainable and resilient”.	The goals for sustainable and resilient community design could be tied to general goals related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as the directions of the City’s new TMP.	PPS 2020 Transportation Master Plan



City of Stratford Official Plan Review
Background Review Report

Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
Stormwater Management	The Section makes general reference to Low Impact Development techniques. It could be strengthened by referring directly to guidelines and manuals prepared by the Province and Conservation Authorities.	In 2022, the Province consulted on a draft guidance manual for Low Impact Development (LID). While this manual has not been finalized to date, it indicated the Province's interest in promoting greater adoption of LID techniques. The current best practice guide in Ontario is the "Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Planning and Design Guide" prepared by the Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP). The UTRCA references the STEP guide.	PPS 2020 1.6.2 and 1.8.1(f) MECP Draft LID Manual
Chapter 7: Community Infrastructure			
Transportation	This chapter provides guidance for the planning and development of infrastructure. It notes that streets will be planned and developed in accordance with the City's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) as well as the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan.	Recent provincial direction emphasizes the need to optimize the use of existing infrastructure and ensure financial viability. This should be reflected in the SOP text.	PPS 2020



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
Infrastructure	The existing policies define approaches for various types of infrastructure, including transit, pedestrian facilities and water/wastewater.	The PPS 2020 and proposed PPS 2023 highlight the need for infrastructure planning to be integrated with land use planning. There should be a direct policy that recognizes and ensures the integration of land-use planning with infrastructure planning.	PPS 2020
Climate Change	The chapter does not reference the link between planning for infrastructure and climate change adaptation.	There should be a direct reference to the need to plan infrastructure that can withstand the impacts of climate change.	PPS 2020 Proposed PPS 2023
Chapter 8: Development Application Review Requirements			
Pre-Consultation	Section 8.2.1 describes the pre-consultation process for development applications but does not provide a high level of detail regarding this aspect of the process.	<p>More detail on pre-application process could improve review timelines.</p> <p>Bill 109 has shortened the timelines available for municipalities to review development applications before they are required to begin refunding applications fees.</p> <p>As a strategy to manage the short timelines, many Ontario municipalities have developed enhanced pre-application</p>	Bill 109 – <i>More Homes for Everyone Act Planning Act</i>



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
		procedures. This ensures that complete applications already have a thorough understanding of the City's intentions for any given development site.	
Planning Applications	Chapter 8.3 lists the required information and materials that need to be submitted for different types of development applications. It notes that the City will advise the applicant in writing of the required submission requirements.	Bill 23 has reduced the scope of matters that can be considered by site plan control. For example, developments that contain no more than 10 residential units on a parcel of land are no longer subject to site plan control. These changes should be reflected in the SOP to guide potential applicants early in the development approval process.	Bill 23 – <i>More Homes Built Faster Act</i>
Comprehensive Review	Section 8.3.1 (xviii) notes that a comprehensive review may be required for certain applications and will be carried out according to the Terms of Reference prepared by the City.	The draft PPS 2023 has proposed to remove the concept of the comprehensive review. If PPS 2023 is implemented as currently proposed, this policy will need to be revisited.	Proposed PPS 2023
Chapter 9: Implementation			
Community Benefits	The chapter explains the legislative framework for implementing the SOP policies. Many of the implementation tools	In 2019, the Province amended Section 37 of the <i>Planning Act</i> to remove height/density bonusing	Bill 108 – <i>More Homes More Choice Act Planning Act</i>



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	such as the zoning by-law and subdivision control arise from the <i>Planning Act</i> which has been extensively amended since the previous OPR. (e.g., section 9.2.6 – ‘Height and Density Bonus Provisions’ describes a process that has been altered by Bill 108 – <i>More Homes More Choice Act</i> .)	and replace it with the Community Benefits Charge. The SOP should be updated to include policies enabling the use of Community Benefits Charges and directing for the preparation of a Community Benefits Charge strategy and by-law.	
Community Planning Permit System	Section 9.2.7 describes the development permit system. This system is now referred to as community planning permits.	Updates should be made to refer to “community planning permits” which have replaced the development permit system.	Bill 108 – <i>More Homes More Choice Act Planning Act</i>
Parkland	SOP policies regarding Parkland Dedication (section 9.9) note that the City shall consider a wide range of mechanisms in order to achieve the objective of acquiring lands for the Parks and Open Space System. The mechanisms available to the City are defined by the <i>Planning Act</i> , <i>Municipal Act</i> , and <i>Development Charges Act</i> .	Since the last update of the SOP, significant changes have been made to the parkland conveyance tools under Section 42 and 51.1 of the <i>Planning Act</i> , including to dedication rates and cash-in-lieu rules.	Bill 108 – <i>More Homes More Choice Act Planning Act</i> O. Reg 509/20
Consultation and Engagement	New – No existing framework for consultation with Indigenous	The PPS requires that municipalities engage with Indigenous communities on land	PPS 2020



Topic	Existing Policy Characterization	Issue, Conflict, or Gap	Key Policy & Legislative Drivers and Resources
	communities on land use planning matters.	use planning matters. There is also an opportunity to address matters related to heritage, public art, community spaces, and parks specific to Indigenous communities.	
Chapter 10: Interpretation			
Interpretation	<p>This chapter provides guidance for interpreting the policies and schedules of the Plan. It notes that the SOP represents a statement of policy and must be interpreted in general terms.</p> <p>The chapter contains definitions for any defined terms that are used throughout the SOP.</p>	<p>The list of definitions will need to be amended and updated throughout the OPR as new policies are developed that might require the use of defined terms.</p> <p>For example, the definition of ‘comprehensive review’ will need to be revised if the proposed PPS 2023 goes into effect as currently written.</p> <p>The definition of the built boundary will need to be updated if the City chooses to revise the location of the existing built boundary for the purpose of measuring future intensification.</p>	General Housekeeping
Chapter 11: Secondary Plans			
See Section 4.3 of this Report for more information about the City’s Secondary Plans.			



3.2 Key Questions

Key questions help inform where changes may be required to the Official Plan and will form the basis of community engagement in Phase 1 of the OPR. These key questions have been identified for each of the thematic areas introduced in Section 1.2 and building on the review of Provincial and Local documents in Section 2. The key questions can be addressed in a wide range of ways through Official Plan and other municipal tools, such as master plans and zoning.

Thematic Area

Key Questions

A Growing City

- Along existing commercial corridors, should the City encourage more placemaking and mixed-use development?
- With changes to the *Planning Act* allowing three units as of right on any lot, should the Official Plan allow up to triplexes as of right on any lot?
- Should the City consider identifying a new strategic growth area or node near Stratford Train Station?
- How can the Official Plan enable a wider choice of housing types, tenures, and affordability to meet diverse housing needs?

A Cultural City

- How can the Official Plan elevate the City's Heritage Conservation District and improve policies, while distinguishing it from the remainder of the core area?
- How can the Official Plan create a cohesive and distinctive built environment and strong sense of place?

A Sustainable City

- How can the Official Plan promote climate change mitigation and adaptation in Stratford?
- How can we be more resilient to future environmental hazards and health risks?

A Green City

- How can the Official Plan protect and enhance important natural heritage and water resources as the City continues to grow?

A Connected and Mobile City

- How can the City implement the goals and objectives of its new Transportation Master Plan?
- How can Stratford's transportation network account for expected growth? How can the City manage mobility and provide more complete streets as it grows?

4 Methodology

4.1 Approach to Updating the Official Plan

As outlined in the City's Terms of Reference, this Official Plan Review is intended to result in an updated Official Plan that satisfies the requirements for a Comprehensive Review set out in the Provincial Policy Statement. Building on the statutory requirements to update the Official Plan, this project provides the opportunity to reimagine a modern and forward-thinking Official Plan for the City of Stratford.

There are two options for a municipality to consider when implementing the proposed policy changes through an Official Plan Review. The first option involves preparing one or more Official Plan Amendment(s) which update, remove, and add policies throughout the Official Plan to implement the outcomes of the OPR. This was the approach taken by the City through its most recent Official Plan conformity exercise in 2015. The second approach involves crafting entirely new Official Plan for the City which, once adopted by Council, would repeal and replace the current Official Plan with a new planning document. In addition to the required conformity changes required to the Official Plan, this approach also provides the opportunity to re-write, re-format, and update many of the other policies and non-operative sections throughout the Official Plan and streamline redundant policies.

Based on the anticipated extent of required changes to the City's Official Plan, and the desire to craft a more contemporary and user-friendly document which also reflects an updated vision for Stratford, it is desirable to follow the second approach and prepare a new Official Plan which repeals and replaces the existing Official Plan. However, there may be sections and policies which are simply carried forward into the new Official Plan, whereas other aspects of the Plan will be reorganized, newly developed or otherwise modified.

4.2 Policy Development Principles

The overall approach to preparing Official Plan policies is to find the right balance between prescriptive policies and offering a degree of flexibility. The writing process for the Official Plan will be iterative in nature and input from the community, agencies, staff and Council will continue to inform policies. The following principles should guide the writing and approach to preparing and reviewing policies for the City's Official Plan.

Future-Thinking

The City's Official Plan should be written and structured to be a forward-thinking strategy which reflects the vision and goals of the community and City administration. The Official Plan will be instrumental to guide and navigate future growth, investments, and decision-making in Stratford.

Flexibility and Criteria-Based

Policies should be written in a manner that is not overly prescriptive so they can remain appropriately flexible unless there is a need for specific, enforceable, and defensible policies and details. Policies should be criteria-based, which enables strategic decision making and flexibility allowing for detailed performance standards to be further explored and defined in the City's Zoning By-law, or through Secondary Plan areas. This is contrasted with prescriptive policies which reference specific minimum and maximum numbers. As a general guideline, an Official Plan should not need to be amended, but should contemplate criteria to allow staff to evaluate a range of different scenarios.

Consistency

Throughout the document, repetition and cross references to other sections should be minimized where possible to improve readability and to ensure users do not miss important, relevant policies. A consistent writing style should be followed throughout the document. This style should yield policies that use plain language wherever possible and avoid the use of passive language, ensuring the intent of policy is clearly articulated and be easily interpreted.

4.3 Approach to Existing Secondary Plans

Over the years, the City has completed two Secondary Plans which establish more detailed policy direction for defined areas in Stratford. Secondary Plans are used to define land use policies, general development policies or area-specific policies which are specific to a defined area of the City. A Secondary Plan has the same "status" as an Official Plan under the *Planning Act*, meaning that any decisions by the City must conform to the policies of the Secondary Plan. Additionally, the broader overarching policies of the Official Plan may be applicable, and the Secondary Plans frequently work to complement these broader policies.

In addition to the Stratford West and Northeast Stratford Secondary Plans, Section 11.3 of the Official Plan contains policies for the Stratford East Planning Area (**Figure 2**). These policies relate to Special Policy Area #19 shown on Schedule A and are not associated with a specific Secondary Plan. It is anticipated that the policies of Section 11.3 will be retained in the new Official Plan; however, consideration should be given to where these policies are located in the document.

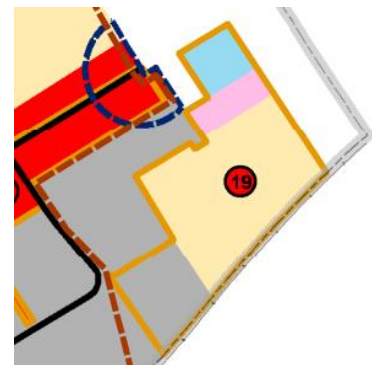


Figure 2 - Stratford East Planning Area (SPA 19)

The new Official Plan must be written and developed in a way that is considerate of the content and structure of the Secondary Plans. Fundamentally, Stratford's Secondary Plans will continue to be required. The notion of repealing or eliminating them in totality would not be desirable and would be very impactful. These Secondary Plan Areas are guiding on-going development and any repeal or significant modifications would be disruptive to on-going development processes.

Schedule A of the current Official Plan reflects the recommended land use plans for the Stratford West (**Figure 2**) and Northeast Secondary Plans (**Figure 3**). For example, blocks designated as medium density residential in the Secondary Plan are also designated medium density residential on Schedule A of the Official Plan.

The scope of the Official Plan Review does not include a comprehensive review or re-write of the City's Secondary Plans. As part of preparing the new Official Plan, it is anticipated that the following steps will be taken with respect to Secondary Plans:

- Secondary Plan policies (Chapter 11) will be carried forward in the new Official Plan.
 - Minor modifications to terminology used in the Secondary Plans may be made to align them with new terminology in the parent Official Plan. For example, if the name of a land use designation is changed or modified.
 - Major revisions or wholesale changes are not recommended to be made.
- Existing land use designations (Schedule A) and other features (e.g., road alignments) will be carried forward in the new Official Plan. It is not anticipated that changes to the delineation of land use areas (e.g., the Natural Heritage System or Medium Density Residential blocks) will be made to Schedule A of the Official Plan.

A subsequent review of the Secondary Plans following completion of the new Official Plan may be required to identify and remove conflicts with the new Official Plan. Reviewing the Secondary Plans can also ensure that they are working towards the new vision for the City, as well as to ensure conformity with Provincial policies.

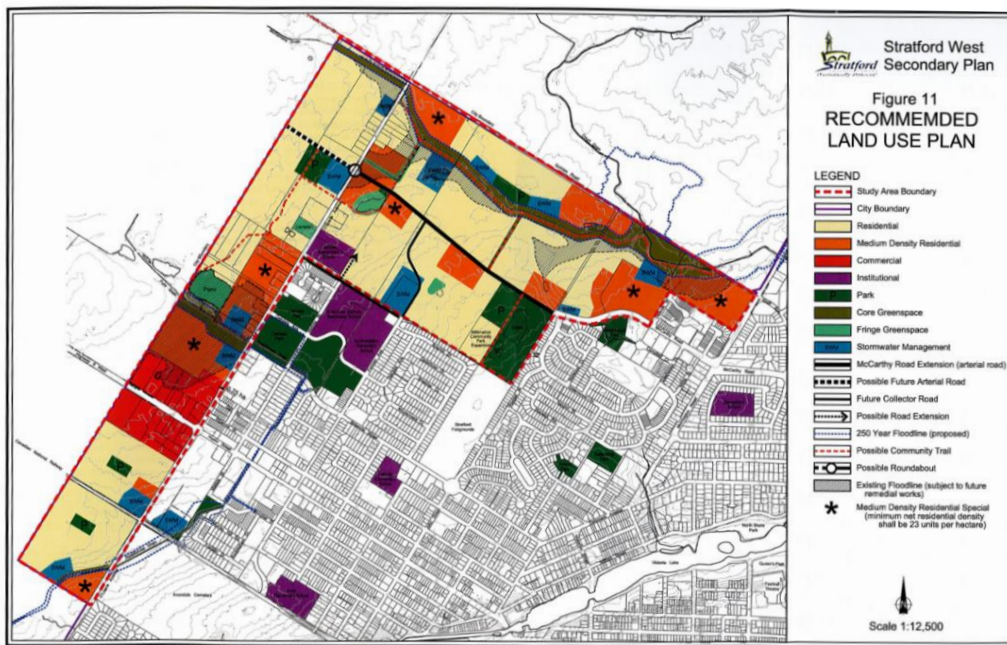


Figure 3 - Stratford West Secondary Plan - Recommended Land Use Plan

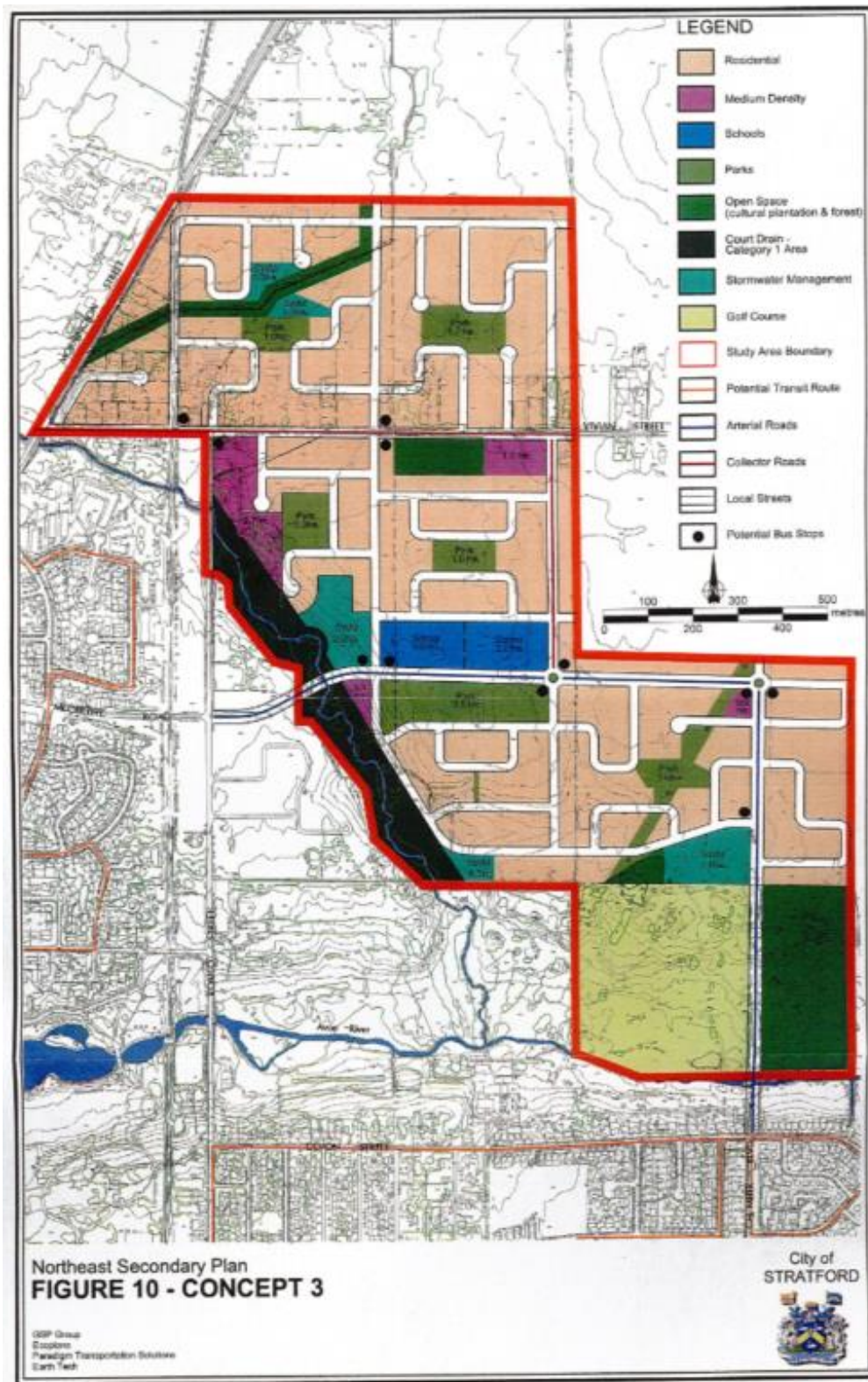


Figure 4 - Northeast Secondary Plan (Land Use Concept)

5 Official Plan Review Next Steps

This Background Review Report is the first deliverable of the Official Plan Review and identifies and reviews key policy drivers and inputs that need to be considered in the new Official Plan. Alongside this Report, Watson & Associates have prepared a Growth Management Background Report that documents trends and existing conditions regarding growth and development in Stratford which will feed into Phase 2. These two Reports will be presented to City Council for endorsement to conclude Phase 1.

Phase 2: How will we grow?

Building on the findings of the Growth Management Background Report, Phase 2 will focus on providing the key technical analysis required to satisfy the Provincial requirements for a Comprehensive Review. City-wide population, housing, and employment forecasts will be prepared for the 2023 to 2048 period. Stemming from these growth forecasts, an updated land needs analysis over a 25-year period will be developed. The Phase 2 Report will include a:

- Residential Land Supply Analysis
- Non-Residential Land Supply Analysis
- Residential Intensification Analysis
- Residential Land Needs Assessment
- Employment Land Needs Assessment
- Review of Employment Conversions to a Non-Employment Use
- Commercial Land Needs Assessment

Phase 3: How will the Official Plan Guide future growth?

Informed by the findings and recommendations set out in Phases 1 and 2 of the Official Plan Review, the third phase of the project will identify specific actions and recommendations about how to update the Official Plan. The work will result in a series of six Policy Directions Discussion Papers, informed by research and community input. Together, these Discussion Papers will serve as a roadmap for preparing the new Official Plan. Each Discussion Paper will be grouped into one of the five project thematic areas and address the key questions introduced in this Report, amongst other topics.

Thematic Area

A Growing City

A Cultural City

A Sustainable City

A Green City

A Connected and Mobile City

Policy Direction Discussion Paper Topics

Growth Management, Housing, and Land Use

Heritage, Tourism, and Design

Climate and Sustainability

Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems

Transportation and Infrastructure



**BY-LAW NUMBER XXX-2023
OF
THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF STRATFORD**

BEING a By-law to confirm the proceedings of Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford at its meeting held on December 7, 2023.

WHEREAS subsection 5(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001 c.25*, as amended, (*the Act*) provides that the powers of a municipal corporation are to be exercised by its council;

AND WHEREAS subsection 5(3) of the *Act* provides that the powers of council are to be exercised by by-law unless the municipality is specifically authorized to do otherwise;

AND WHEREAS it is deemed expedient that the proceedings of the Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford at this meeting be confirmed and adopted by By-law;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED by the Council of The Corporation of the City of Stratford as follows:

1. That the action of the Council at its meeting held on December 7, 2023, in respect of each report, motion, resolution, recommendation or other action passed and taken by the Council at its meeting, is hereby adopted, ratified and confirmed, as if each report, motion, resolution or other action was adopted, ratified and confirmed by its separate by-law.
2. The Mayor of the Council and the proper officers of the City are hereby authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to the said action, to obtain approvals where required, and, except where otherwise provided, to execute all documents necessary in that behalf in accordance with the by-laws of the Council relating thereto.

Read a FIRST, SECOND and THIRD time and

FINALLY PASSED this 7th day of December, 2023.

Mayor – Martin Ritsma

Clerk – Tatiana Dafoe