



# Middlesex County Official Plan

*Engagement Summary Report*

*June 2025*

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# Outline

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- *Community Survey Results Summary*



# Executive Summary

## CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The County is in the process of updating the Official Plan to bring it into conformity with the policies of the new Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) aimed at guiding land use planning and development across the province.

An important step in this multi-phase Official Plan Review process is the consultation with key sectors and community members who live and work in the County.

## APPROACH

Multiple approaches were used to gather input including open public house session, focus groups and a community survey.



3

Public Open Houses – May, Oct, Nov



33

Focus Group Participants



95

Community Survey Respondents

**Thematic key takeaways and insights have been summarized in this report to inform the refresh of the Official Plan.**

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Expand affordable, diverse housing by easing barriers and using supportive policies

2

Preserve farmland through focused growth and sustainable practices

3

Enable streamlined processes and flexible planning for economic development

4

Align expansion with infrastructure, protect land, and modernize land use policy frameworks



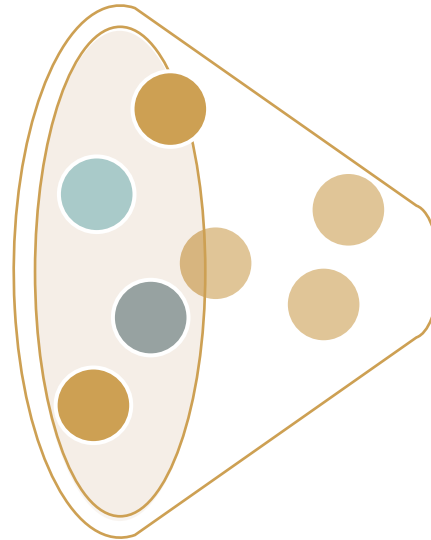
# Methodology

Multiple approaches were used to gather data from a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The output from the engagements were analysed and synthesised into key themes, insights and strategic questions for Middlesex County to consider.

## FROM OBSERVATION...



DATA COLLECTION



ANALYSIS and SYNTHESIS OF KEY THEMES









## ...TO INSIGHTS

Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

### Key Themes and Insights: Summary

The results of the stakeholder engagement phase of this project have been aggregated into a set of key themes and insights, which provide County Council and Senior leaders a launching pad for the next strategic plan.

Key Theme	Insights
 Focus on Economic Development and Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Diversify the tax base to enable economic growth</li><li>Support growth with appropriate funding and scaling of support services</li><li>Make the key strategic choice regarding the future fiscal posture of the County</li></ul>
 Foster Collaborative Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Seek new models of collaboration between Council and local municipalities, London and the Province</li><li>Capitalize on efficiency opportunities between the County and local municipalities</li><li>Foster productive relationships with local First Nations communities to advance common interests</li></ul>
 Increase Education and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clarify and communicate the role of the County vs. local municipalities with ALL key stakeholders, including Council members and constituents</li><li>Improve and formalize Council on-boarding programs</li></ul>
 Build Internal Capability and Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prioritize modernization of technology and process, with a focus on finance as an early priority</li><li>Bolster the capacity of in-demand support services and design a fit-for-purpose model for each service/program area</li></ul>

KEY FINDINGS



## **Key Themes and Insights**

# Key Themes and Insights: Summary

The results of the engagement phase of this project have been aggregated into a set of key themes and insights, to ensure the refreshed Official Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of the people who live, work, and invest in Middlesex community.

## Key Themes



***Affordable housing on  
serviceable land***



**Protect Farmland and  
Support Agricultural Viability**



**Smart Growth Planning**



**Sustainable Land  
Stewardship**

## Insights

- Prioritize affordable, smaller homes and senior housing to meet changing demographics and preferences.
- Address barriers like zoning restrictions and limited infrastructure capacity.
- Use land use policies to support diverse housing options, redevelopment, and gentle density.

- Protect farmland by directing growth inward and supporting on-farm housing and diversification.
- Address farm succession challenges and improve rural infrastructure and services.
- Restrict non-farm development on prime agricultural land and promote sustainable practices.

- Focus on agriculture-related sectors, tech manufacturing, and robotics with clear, strategic priorities.
- Streamline regulations, incentivize job-creating projects, and strengthen regional partnerships.
- Support entrepreneurship, mixed-use development, and flexible land use policies.

- Expand settlement boundaries with adequate infrastructure, affordability, and alignment with County's vision.
- Protect agricultural/natural lands, ensure public consultation, and promote complete, accessible communities.
- Address barriers to support innovation, redevelopment, and economic vitality.





# Theme #1: Affordable Housing and Serviceable Land

## WHAT WE HEARD

- Partners and community consistently emphasize a growing **housing affordability crisis**, making traditional single-family homes increasingly out of reach for younger households. This demographic shift is coupled with changing lifestyle preferences, with many younger residents favoring **smaller, more manageable housing options** such as townhomes, semi-detached units, or apartments that align with their financial capabilities, evolving buying preferences and service needs.
- An aging population adds complexity, creating significant demand for **senior-appropriate housing**, including options that enable aging in place and foster community continuity. Current housing stock is insufficient to meet these needs, and many seniors may be forced to relocate outside the County without adequate local options.
- Barriers such as **restrictive zoning and complex, time-consuming planning approvals** hinder the ability of developers to deliver affordable and diverse housing types quickly and cost-effectively. Additionally, infrastructure capacity limits the feasibility of denser or new housing developments. The preservation of agricultural lands further restricts the availability of developable land, intensifying competition and pressure on housing supply.
- Stakeholders also highlight a disconnect between government policies and the **dynamic nature of housing demand**, with insufficient mechanisms to track and respond to changing citizen preferences. This gap underscores the need for ongoing monitoring and adaptive planning.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to highlight the need to:

- **Revise policies to increase affordable housing options** that cater to younger generations' preferences for smaller, cost-effective homes, as well as senior housing to support an aging population.
- **Address barriers** such as zoning restrictions, infrastructure limitations, and approval processes by enabling higher-density development, additional residential units, and inclusive, universally designed homes.
- **Balance housing expansion with farmland protection** by encouraging development within existing neighborhoods and leveraging more brownfield through build-up and not out, while minimizing farmland conversion.



# Theme #2: Protect Farmland and Support Agricultural Viability

## WHAT WE HEARD

- Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Middlesex County's identity and economy, but it faces significant threats from expanding urbanization. Stakeholders articulate a clear preference for **directing growth inward**, maximizing density in communities rather than expanding settlement boundaries into prime farmland.
- The viability of farms depends on more than just land protection; **on-farm housing for seasonal and foreign workers** is critical to operational continuity, as is enabling **diversified agricultural uses** that allow farms to innovate and increase income streams beyond traditional farming.
- A particularly acute challenge is **farm succession**. Without proper planning and support, farms are often sold off or there is pressure to subdivide, resulting in the loss of agricultural land and heritage. This issue intersects with generational and economic factors, requiring supportive policies and community education.
- Stakeholders note infrastructure deficits in rural areas, such as limited transit and inadequate social support programs, which affect both farming operations and rural residents' quality of life. There are also tensions between farming and non-farming land uses, highlighting the need for careful land use planning and conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Environmental sustainability and climate resilience are growing concerns, pressing the need for green building practices and resource conservation integrated into agricultural and rural planning.



## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to highlight that:

- **Growth should be directed inward**, focusing on increasing density in communities to prevent urban sprawl onto valuable farmland.
- **Policies should support farm viability** through on-farm housing for seasonal workers, diversified farm uses, and improved farm succession planning to reduce farmland loss.
- **Cross-municipal coordination should be strengthened** to create clear frameworks for settlement boundary expansion to protect agricultural lands while accommodating rural housing needs.





# Theme #3: Smart Growth Planning

## WHAT WE HEARD

- The County's economic future is closely linked to its strengths in **agriculture and agri-business**, but stakeholders recognize the importance of diversifying into **high- and mid-tech manufacturing**, farm-to-table enterprises, construction and housing product manufacturing, food processing innovations, and emerging sectors like robotics.
- Middlesex County benefits from strategic transportation links and proximity to major markets, which are seen as key assets to leverage for attracting investment. However, economic development efforts suffer from fragmented coordination across government agencies, regulatory processes, and limited incentives for businesses to invest locally.
- There is a clear call for a more **focused, strategic approach** in the Official Plan that avoids trying to support every sector equally, instead prioritizing those with the highest growth potential and strongest regional fit. Stakeholders stress the importance of having an economic development champion to break down bureaucratic silos and better integrate initiatives.
- Flexibility in zoning and land use policies is needed to support **entrepreneurship, adaptive reuse**, and mixed-use developments that can nurture small businesses and startups. This is especially important for settlement areas where revitalization and innovation can create vibrant local economies.
- The County's relationship with regional partners like the London EDC is viewed as critical for attracting **foreign direct investment** and supporting more proactive business recruitment campaigns.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to:

- **Prioritize attracting and retaining jobs** in agriculture, advanced manufacturing, agri-business, and emerging sectors like robotics and food processing.
- **Streamline regulatory processes**, reduce development fees, and foster partnerships with regional economic organizations to boost investment and competitiveness.
- **Encourage diversified commercial and industrial land uses**, entrepreneurship in settlement areas, and tailored precinct planning to stimulate local economic innovation and growth.



# Theme #4: Strategic Settlement Expansion

## WHAT WE HEARD

- Expansion of settlement areas must be managed carefully to **balance growth pressures with fiscal, environmental, and social sustainability**. Interested parties emphasized that new growth should align closely with existing or planned infrastructure capacity, especially low-cost servicing options, to avoid unsustainable future maintenance burdens on municipalities.
- Recent provincial policy shifts have changed the development approval landscape, giving landowners more direct influence over boundary expansions. This **increases the complexity and urgency for local governments to have robust, transparent, and expedited processes** to manage requests effectively while safeguarding community values.
- **Community input is critical** but often underutilized or rushed in these processes, risking developments that do not reflect local needs or preferences. Community members advocate for strong public engagement mechanisms and for new developments to contribute meaningfully to **complete communities** — places with accessible green space, affordable housing, transit options, and services.
- Affordability, accessibility, infrastructure service capacity, community needs, climate resilience, and employment land availability emerge as key principles to embed in any expansion strategy, ensuring long-term community health and prosperity.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Middlesex may need to leverage the Official Plan update to:

- **Ensure settlement area expansions are carefully evaluated** based on infrastructure capacity, economic servicing efficiency, and alignment with long-term municipal sustainability and vision.
- **Protect farmland and natural environments** by directing growth to designated settlement areas and prioritizing complete, accessible, and climate-resilient communities.
- **Engage communities meaningfully in planning decisions**, incorporate affordable housing targets in new developments, and balance operational costs of infrastructure and services.



# Community Survey: Key Insights

The Community Survey revealed relevant insights aligned to the themes from focus groups and open public house.



## Affordable Housing and Serviceable Land

- Middlesex must expand diverse and affordable housing options to meet shifting demographics, especially for youth and seniors.
- Land use tools, affordability targets, and surplus land conversion are essential to unlock supply.
- Tracking housing metrics is critical for responsive planning.



## Protect Farmland and Support Agricultural Viability

- Farmland is at risk; protecting it requires smart growth policies focused on density and infill in existing communities.
- Succession planning, farm viability, and rural infrastructure must be prioritized to sustain the agricultural economy.



## Smart Growth Planning

- Legacy zoning and approval processes limit growth; regulatory reform and flexibility are key.
- Supporting brownfield redevelopment, mixed-use areas, and protecting employment lands will drive innovation and attract investment.
- Housing supply and economic development must be planned together to support a strong workforce.



## Sustainable Land Stewardship

- Settlement expansion must be aligned with infrastructure capacity, cost-efficiency, and farmland protection.
- Community input, affordability, and complete communities must guide all development decisions.



# Appendix



# Focus Groups

Specific lines of inquiry were tailored to participants based on gather insights across the areas of economic development, agriculture, housing and growth and development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	CAOs	AGRICULTURE	LOCAL COUNCILS	PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 11 Participants</li><li>• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning and Development</li><li>• Water Supply</li><li>• Construction</li><li>• Real Estate</li><li>• School Boards</li><li>• Manufacturing</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 8 Participants</li><li>• Representatives across 6 municipalities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 Participants</li><li>• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local farmers</li><li>• Greenhouse owners</li><li>• Ontario Farming community</li><li>• Agriculture advocacy agencies</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 Participants</li><li>• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• North Middlesex</li><li>• Strathroy-Caradoc</li><li>• Middlesex Centre</li><li>• Lucan Biddulph</li><li>• Middlesex Centre</li><li>• Newbury</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5 Participants</li><li>• Representatives from:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning and Development</li><li>• Agriculture Federation</li><li>• Service providers</li><li>• Real Estate</li><li>• Business owners/investors</li></ul></li></ul>





# Focus Group – Discussion Guide

Specific lines of inquiry were tailored to participants based on gather insights across the economic development, agriculture, housing and growth and development sectors.

Lines of Inquiry	Discussion
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What types of housing do you think our community needs more of to support residents of all ages and income levels?</li><li>• What are the barriers/key factors that need to be considered?</li></ul>
<b>Agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can we best protect farmland while also supporting a thriving and modern agricultural sector?</li></ul>
<b>Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What kinds of jobs or businesses would you like to see grow or be attracted to our community?</li><li>• How can the Official Plan better support economic development and innovation?</li></ul>
<b>Growth &amp; Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What key factors should be taken into account when evaluating a request to expand a settlement area boundary?</li></ul>







# Focus Group: Results Summary

## Economic development

### Housing factors and challenges

1. Affordability
2. Servicing capability relative to growth
3. Good local jobs
4. Protection of Agriculture land
5. Aligning demand vs. supply

### Protect farmland by:

1. Increasing density in communities
2. On-farm housing
3. Continue to locate new schools within existing settlement areas
4. Zoned industrial land – high costs to service it

### Types of jobs/businesses to attract

1. Ag and Ag-related businesses
2. High tech mid manufacturing
3. Construction and housing related products, prefab

### Factors to support economic development

1. Clear direction & policy on partnership development
2. Focus, don't try to be everything, leverage strengths
3. Economic champion contact
4. Incentivize by reducing costs

### Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary:

1. Where is community services and infrastructure located?
2. Schools and other community services
3. Accelerate the process

## CAOs

### Gaps in current housing supply

1. Attainable and affordable
2. Additional residential units
3. Barriers: infrastructure limits, legacy zoning
4. Higher density compatible with existing housing

### Land use policy tools for agriculture...

1. On-farm diversified uses
2. Settlement boundary expansion application process
3. Address conflict between ag protection vs. building new housing
4. Ag impact studies & assessments

### Ways to support emerging sectors ...

1. Create business park nodes along major intersections
2. On farm diversified use policies
3. Expand definitions of commercial /industrial uses

### Criteria in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. Does it affect the urban boundary?
2. Infrastructure (can it be serviced?)
3. Impact on ag lands?
4. Transportation networks and proximity to community services

## Agriculture

### Housing factors and challenges

1. Servicing capability relative to infrastructure
2. Minimize using farmland for new housing
3. Lack of transit and social support programs

### Issues facing agriculture and rural

1. Create policies to attract support business who supply ag industry Infrastructure provided by municipality to allow ag to thrive
2. Aging farm population
3. Farm development and permitting process made easier

### Types of jobs/businesses we should attract:

1. Agri technology
2. Food processing
3. Construction and other ag related services

### How to balance growth with farmland protection

1. Encourage best use of land
2. Grow up not out (intensify)
3. Encourage mix of housing (not all family subdivisions)

### Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. Community interest is the priority driver
2. Contiguous development is critical (not hopscotching)
3. Servicing capability

## Local Councils

### Housing factors and challenges

1. Lack of infrastructure servicing capacity
2. Lots of processes to get through (studies, engineering assessments etc.)
3. Zoning is a barrier
4. DCs can be costly

### How to balance growth with farmland protection

1. Limit expansion of towns & settlement areas
2. Engage with ag community stakeholders
3. Grow up not out, encourage infill

### Types of jobs/businesses we should attract...

1. Ag and Ag tech
2. Small to midsize manufacturing
3. Independent local businesses
4. Food processing industry

### Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. Infrastructure capacity
2. Does it serve the interests of the community?
3. Timeliness and commitment to develop
4. Are there already lands in the settlement area unused?

## Public Open House

### Housing factors and challenges

1. Servicing capability
2. Shortages in land
3. Affordability
4. Densification

### Protect farmland by...

1. Intensification: Build up not out
2. Succession planning (farmers are older and difficult to entice next gen)

### Types of jobs/businesses we should attract:

1. Small-medium size business
2. Farm to table businesses
3. Food production
4. Agriculture support services

### Factors in expanding a settlement area boundary

1. How easy is it service the land
2. Is the investor serious about developing or speculating?
3. Protect our high-quality farmland



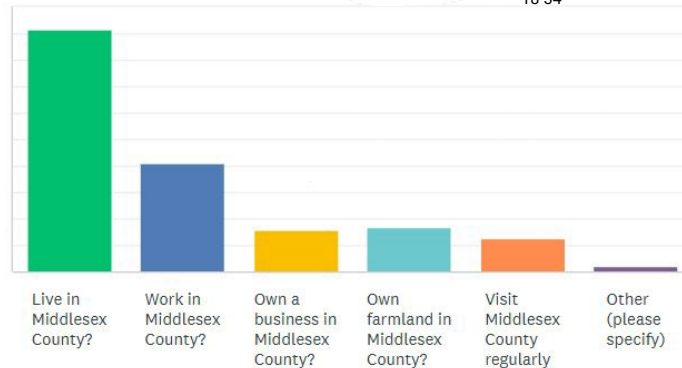
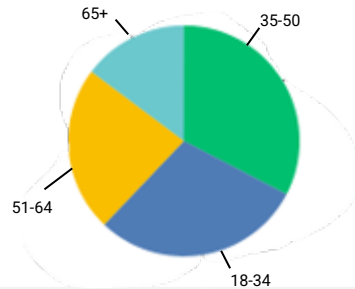
# Community Survey

95 survey respondents

## Demographics of respondents

39% Middlesex  
Centre  
22% North  
Middlesex  
9.5% Southwest  
Middlesex  
9.5% Strathroy-  
Caradoc  
7% Lucan  
Biddulph

4% Thames Centre  
2% Newbury  
2% Adelaide  
5% Other  
(London, Hungry Hollow, Central Elgin, Lambton Shores)



## What makes Middlesex County a great place to live?

- **Rural Charm with Urban Connectivity:** Community members strongly value Middlesex County's rural character—marked by tranquility, natural beauty, and a small-town feel—while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining access to modern amenities. Proximity to London, the 401/402 corridors, and essential services such as healthcare, education, and shopping enhances the county's appeal by offering the best of both rural and urban living.
- **Community Strength and Safety:** Residents highlight a deep appreciation for the county's welcoming, friendly atmosphere and strong sense of community. Middlesex is viewed as a safe and supportive environment that attracts a diverse population, including young families and retirees, all drawn to the region's quality of life, independence, and close-knit social fabric.

## What would you like to see change/improve in the County over the next 10–20 years?

- **Smart Growth and Inclusive Planning:** Leadership should prioritize focused growth within serviced settlement areas, preserve farmland, expand housing options (including affordable and diverse types), and enhance local services, transportation, and amenities to support vibrant, connected communities.
- **Sustainable Economy and Responsive Governance:** Support economic diversification through business attraction and rural development incentives, protect natural and agricultural assets, and ensure transparent, community-informed decision-making processes.

# Community Survey



## Housing

### Priorities to enable affordable housing



### Top housing needs:

- 54% Single Detached Homes
- 46% Affordable Housing
- 35% Townhomes/Semi-detach
- 31% Seniors' Housing
- 27% Apartments & Condos

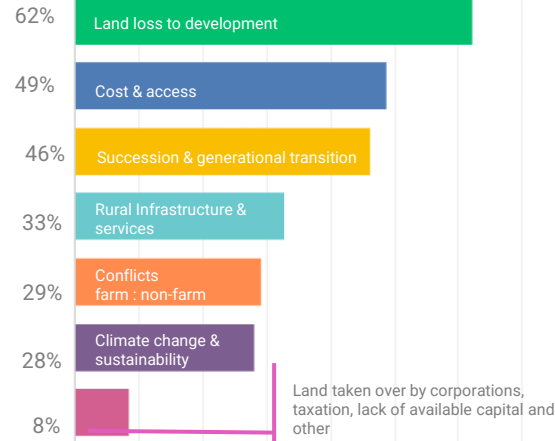
**69%** support new housing development near existing town/village centres

**53%** support higher-density new housing development



## Agriculture

### Top Agriculture or Rural Issues:



**50% Limit urban sprawl** by directing growth to designated Settlement Areas & **Restrict non-farm development** on prime agricultural land

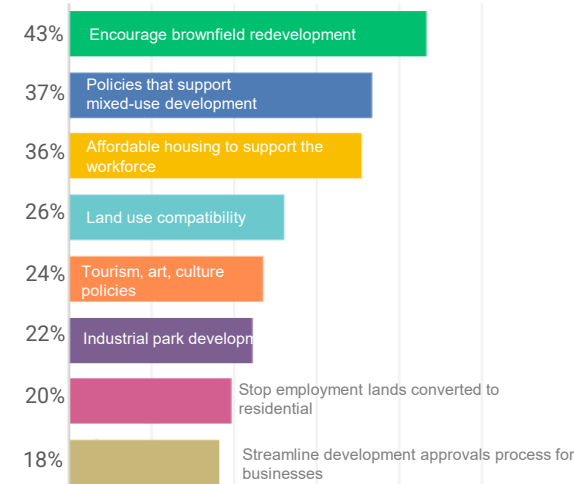
**>30% Support local food systems** and farm viability, Encourage higher-density development in existing Settlement Areas and encourage redevelopment or infill of underused properties

**>15% Implement a monitoring and reporting program** to assess land needs and inform



## Economic Development

### Priorities to better support economic development & innovation:



**17% Experienced barriers** starting or expanding a business such as high developmental costs, project delays, high land price, dominance of large corporations and cumbersome building approvals

**Awareness of planning policies and zoning regulations limiting economic development**

**40% was not aware any barriers**

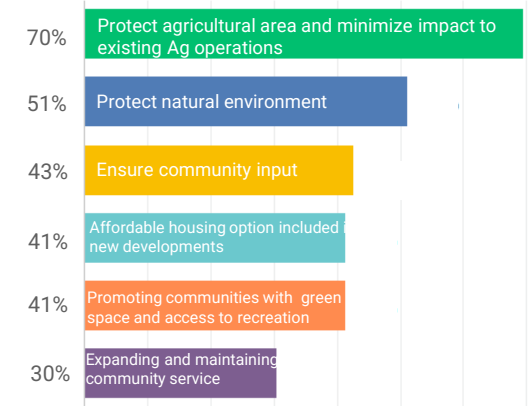
**40%** lack of flexibility in permitted land uses

**22%** Development approval process



## Growth & Development

### Top considerations for expansion of settlement area boundary



**20%** Plan growth to balance long-term financial impacts, support active transportation, secure land for jobs, and promote sustainable, climate-resilient development.

Prioritize **cost-effective, serviceable** land for development to **keep DCs low** and avoid the high infrastructure costs of expanding beyond established urban centers





**QUARRY**  
C o n s u l t i n g