



INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO:	CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS
DEPARTMENT:	DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
PREPARED BY:	Will Nywening, Senior Planning Official
REVIEWED BY:	Corrine Nauta, Manager, Development Services Jason Cole, P.Eng., General Manager Stéphane Thiffeault, Chief Administrative Officer
MEETING DATE:	April 15, 2026
SUBJECT:	County Official Plan Update

BACKGROUND

The County Official Plan (the “**COP**”) sets community goals, policies, and priorities and guides regional growth. Local Official Plans, Zoning By-Laws, and *Planning Act* decisions must conform to it. The existing COP was adopted by County Council in 2017.

The *Planning Act* requires regular review and updates to ensure Official Plans reflect evolving community goals and align with current provincial legislation and policy. The 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (the “**PPS**”) came into effect in October 2024. It establishes the policy direction guiding this review. The COP and its review must be consistent with the PPS.

The County of Lambton has retained and is working with NPG Planning Solutions (“**NPG**”) to lead the COP review. NPG’s subcontractors, metroeconomics and Parcel Economics Inc., produced draft population, employment, and housing “Projections by Municipality” (“**Projections**”) and a Land Needs Assessment (“**LNA**”) as part of this work.

A report summarizing the Projections and LNA studies was presented to the County of Lambton Committee of the Whole at its October 15, 2025, meeting. The studies were subsequently shared with local municipalities and agencies and posted for public input.

DISCUSSION

The Projections and LNA were posted for public consultation and comments were accepted until March 13, 2026. A matrix summarizing all written submissions and responses is provided in Attachment 1. Attachment 2 to this report compiles all written submissions, as received.

Minor revisions are recommended to the LNA; none to the Projections. The previously presented Projections and a revised version of the LNA, based on comments received, are provided as Attachments 3 and 4.

Comments on Projections and LNA

Warwick and Plympton-Wyoming identified minor corrections to the vacant land inventory and provided updated housing unit figures based on known development concepts. The LNA has been updated for accuracy. The original (September 29, 2025) LNA's conclusions do not materially change.

Written submissions included comments on the methodology of the Projections and LNA. The following key themes were noted:

- the allocation of Ministry growth projections between lower tiers,
- the amount of growth anticipated to be accommodated through intensification versus greenfield development (intensification targets),
- the assumed distribution of housing unit types needed to meet growth demands (e.g., single detached vs. apartment),
- whether “development-readiness” was considered in lands included in the vacant land supply,
- whether regional market demand was considered in allocating growth between municipalities and in the assumed housing mix,
- the concentration of land supply among relatively few owners in some areas,
- industrial land needs projections,
- the choice of 2051 as the planning horizon,
- assumptions regarding seasonal dwelling units,
- the exclusion of lots less than 200 square metres from the vacant land supply, and
- the exclusion of natural heritage features from the vacant land supply.

The submissions also included a range of conflicting suggestions, with some proposing increases and others decreases to identified land needs.

On review, the assumptions and methodologies used in the Projections and LNA were found to be consistent with Ministry guidance and appropriate for Lambton's context. Detailed responses to comments on methodology are provided in Attachments 1 and 2.

For the City of Sarnia, the intensification targets and residential unit mix reflect those already adopted by the City. The LNA's vacant land supply builds on the City's recent Growth Management Strategy.

Comments to Note for Future Steps in the COP Review:

Some comments received were not directly related to the Projections or LNA but will help inform future stages of the COP review, including updates to COP policies and the existing COP land use plan.

Several submissions requested inclusion of specific properties or making other revisions to settlement area boundaries shown on the COP's land use plan. Based on planning discussions and enquiries outside of the COP review process, it is of note that additional landowners have expressed interest in settlement expansions who have not yet submitted formal requests. Some of these requests relate to areas where the LNA indicates additional lands are not required. Other submissions support retaining existing boundaries in certain areas.

Additional submissions raised questions about non-residential land needs, including the need for additional non-residential lands in specific locations or the redesignation of non-residential lands for residential use instead of expanding settlement areas into agricultural areas.

How and where these needs will be accommodated will be determined following adoption of the LNA, in consultation with municipalities. However, it is noted that some requested expansions apply to municipalities where land supply is already sufficient or to lower-order settlement areas where growth is not directed under COP policies.

With respect to commercial land needs, the LNA's "net to gross percentages" include an allowance for land for non-residential uses, including neighbourhood commercial, in the projected land needs. An assessment of regional-scale commercial land needs is outside the scope of the LNA and could be completed separately, potentially through privately initiated County or local Official Plan amendment applications.

Additional comments not directly related to the Projections or LNA will be considered as part of future COP policy development. Responses to these comments are provided in Attachments 1 and 2.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding to undertake these studies as part of the COP review was included in the approved County of Lambton 2024 Budget.

CONSULTATIONS

The Projections and LNA were forwarded to local municipalities and agencies for comment and posted for public consultation following the October 15, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting. The commenting submissions were accepted until March 13, 2026. Municipal and public input is summarized above and in Attachments 1 and 2.

A notification list has been developed for interested parties. Reports, milestones and details on future steps will be posted on the dedicated web page, as they are established. Municipalities, agencies, and those on the notification list will receive direct notice and further opportunities to participate in the COP review process.

A representative of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation has requested to be engaged specifically regarding settlement area expansions. The County of Lambton will consult with all First Nation communities as part of each step of the COP review process.

Staff will also work with local municipalities on any settlement area boundary changes considered through the COP review or related Official Plan Amendment applications.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Area of Effort #1: Economic Development and Prosperity - The County will focus on economic growth and prosperity. Working with organizations such as the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership, Tourism Sarnia-Lambton, and the Western Sarnia-Lambton Research Park, the County will contribute to economic growth and prosperity by:

- Adopting policies and practices to increase the County's population to support economic growth and evolving workforce demands.

Area of Effort #5: Partnerships - The County is committed to developing strong relationships with community partners, municipalities, and First Nations by:

- Hosting regular engagement opportunities to facilitate information sharing with partners.

CONCLUSION

Based on feedback received during public consultation, minor updates are recommended to the previously presented LNA, for accuracy. These changes do not materially alter the overarching conclusions presented to the Committee of the Whole on October 15, 2025. Consultation also identified comments not directly related to the Projections or LNA that will inform future steps in the COP review.

Projections and LNA are important components of the COP review, but represent only one part of a broader COP update process. Additional review of the current COP and development of a background report outlining issues and proposed updates is underway. Public engagement sessions will follow to gather input and identify additional issues, community goals and priorities. Council will be informed of public engagement details as they are confirmed.

Revisions to settlement area boundaries on the COP's Growth Strategy Map 1 are expected through the COP review. Revisions will be based on expressions of interest from landowners or development proponents and developed in consultation with affected municipalities. The Terms of Reference for the COP Review describes a process for interested parties to apply to have their lands considered for settlement boundary expansions.

The 2024 PPS now permits private applications for settlement area expansions, which were not permitted when the Terms of Reference were adopted. Council should also be aware that, once the LNA is adopted, the County and local municipalities may receive County and/or local Official Plan amendment applications. These processes may proceed concurrently with the COP review and will need to be considered alongside settlement area expansion requests brought forward through the review.

Near the conclusion of the COP review, a finalized list of proposed amendments, reflecting consultant recommendations and public feedback, will be presented to Council for review and potential adoption. All amendments must then be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as the approval authority.

RECOMMENDATION

That County Council accept and adopt the *Projections by Municipality*, dated September 2025 (“Projections”) and the *Land Needs Assessment* revised as of March 31, 2026 (“LNA”) and that the Projections and LNA be used for land use planning purposes in the ongoing review of the County of Lambton Official Plan conducted pursuant to Section 26 of the *Planning Act*.