



Municipality of North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy 2015 - 2020 March 16, 2016



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1) Introduction

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1 Introduction

The Municipality of North Middlesex has a history that is firmly rooted in agriculture and farming. This, in part, defines both the local economy and the labour market, and has influenced both the businesses and the people who make up the community. Amalgamated in 2001 by bringing together the municipalities of the Village of Ailsa Craig; Town of Parkhill; Town of McGillivray; and, the Townships of East and West Williams, the municipality has a unique offering for its size in that there are two distinct downtown, commercial areas in the larger communities of Parkhill and Ailsa Craig. However, over the last two census periods (2001 to 2011) North Middlesex has experienced on-going population declines from 6,901 in 2001 to 6,658 in 2011. This decline of 3.5%, although not significant, is indicative that North Middlesex is facing challenges in a changing economy. While agriculture will remain an integral component of the local economy, it is necessary to explore and pursue new and innovative ways to diversify the local economic base.

With the service and knowledge-based economy becoming a major driver of economic growth across North America, the roles of cities and regions are being reshaped and redefined in a shifting global economy. Cities and regions are emerging as key locations for finance and major centres for production and innovation, as well as research and development. The proximity of North Middlesex to the City of London provides the community the potential to adapt and leverage these changes for its own economic development needs. As major urban centres continue to expand outward, so to do the opportunities for rural municipalities to increase their population base and develop the local economy to support increased commercial and employment opportunities. This is an important factor as communities such as North Middlesex strive to retain their youth populations and attract new residents.

Being conveniently positioned along main routes from more urbanized areas to key travel, recreation, and tourism destinations (e.g., Pinery Park, Lambton Shores, and Grand Bend among others) the municipality can benefit from leveraging its location, and explore opportunities to expand its commercial offerings and local amenities. Further, a lower cost of living, property, and a high quality, semi-rural to country lifestyle makes North Middlesex an appealing home location for families, professionals, and the self-employed looking to strike a work/life balance.

The process of economic development is multi-disciplinary and multifaceted. It requires a collective effort and a team approach to derive the most beneficial results. The Municipality of North Middlesex is part of a two-tier government environment, and benefits from its inclusion in a broader regional and the southwestern Ontario economy. The long term success of the municipality will be tied not only to its ability to differentiate itself and understand and promote its unique value proposition, there needs to be a balance that compliments the greater economy it operates within. This will strengthen the municipality's growth potential.





The **North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy 2015 – 2020** provides the Municipality with the research, knowledge, and recommended initiatives to chart North Middlesex’s economic future, and establishes a shared, community-based economic vision and strategic priorities that outline the necessary steps that can be taken to bolster the community’s future growth and prosperity. It is a living document that should be reviewed regularly, and re-evaluated after its five year lifecycle to explore significant changes in the community, and to validate emerging and existing priorities.

The strategy was developed through a lens that explored innovative approaches to thinking and to future implementation. This is important as North Middlesex is operating in an increasingly competitive environment where municipalities must explore new ways of approaching both service delivery and community sustainability. This thinking has been incorporated into the strategic planning process and balanced against what is realistically achievable. The goal is a “made in North Middlesex strategy”, that draws from best and promising practices and applies a local perspective that builds on local assets and strengths.



1.1 Executive Summary

The Municipality of North Middlesex has chosen to undertake its first formal Economic Development Strategy in order to address the challenges the community is facing (aging and declining population, youth outmigration, unrecognized development potential, declining agricultural employment, limited commercial businesses, and underperforming Downtowns). It is intended that this will be achieved by stimulating economic development opportunity through business retention and expansion, residential and commercial development, population and investment attraction, and building on the strong community networks and agricultural industry base.

The **North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy 2015 – 2020** was created using a local level perspective, and includes significant levels of community and stakeholder engagement that ensures its findings, recommendations, actions, and conclusions are based in evidence. It contains a shared understanding among local community, business, and political leaders and reflects the priorities of economic development opportunities and goals for the future prosperity of North Middlesex.

An important aspect of the Strategy is the establishment of an economic vision that will carry the municipality through the life of the plan and act as a rallying call to all community members and stakeholders as to what and where North Middlesex sees itself in the future.

The following vision reflects the input, values, desires, and aspirations of the community:

North Middlesex is known for its diversified, export-focused agricultural sector; two vibrant Downtown commercial centres underpinned by small business and entrepreneurship; and ongoing residential and employment growth supporting an increase in population and economic opportunity.

Based on the evidence and research undertaken in this report, the strategic priorities for the 2015 – 2020 North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy are:

- 1. Build the economic development capacity in North Middlesex**
- 2. Infrastructure for industry and residents (including high speed internet)**
- 3. Ensure the community is attractive to new residents and businesses**
- 4. Business retention and expansion and supporting entrepreneurship**
- 5. Market and promote North Middlesex**
- 6. Ensure sustainable residential housing growth and diversity**

“The Municipality needs to be the leader in economic development.”

Parkhill Business Operator

North Middlesex will know its economic development programming and efforts are having a positive effect, and that the community is moving closer to achieving its economic vision when the following goals are being met:

- ***Diversification of the economy and agricultural industry***
- ***Improved access to high speed internet***
- ***Effective marketing and promotion of the community***
- ***A sustainable and growing small business base***
- ***Increased local employment and local population***
- ***New residential development and affordable housing***
- ***Support for senior populations and leveraging opportunities related to seniors***
- ***Youth attraction, supporting increased school enrolment***
- ***Available, zoned, serviced, and shovel-ready lands***



- *Celebrating a high quality of life and an affordable place to live*
- *Efficient development administration*
- *Healthy and thriving commercial Main Streets (Downtowns)*
- *Increased commercial amenities, entertainment, and lifestyle services to satisfy local consumers and visitors*
- *Increased visitations, new destination marketing initiatives in place, and unique tourism opportunities being leveraged*

The Strategy provides a fact-based understanding and an action plan that incorporates the growth challenges facing North Middlesex, the community's leading and emerging economic sectors, and thoughts gleaned from extensive consultation with local and regional stakeholders. To support the Municipality in its efforts to advance the economic vision and move towards its vision goals, the Economic Development Strategy outlines six areas of strategic priority.

The selection of the strategic priorities and their corresponding action plans were assembled drawing from multi-pronged research, stakeholder and community consultations including:

- A detailed background review and reconnaissance of secondary literature, policies, and programs
- Comprehensive demographic, labour, and economic analysis
- Online survey distributed to local residents, businesses, and community groups
- One-on-one telephone interviews with local and global business leaders, former residents, regional, and provincial organizations
- Town Hall meetings, invitation stakeholder meetings, EDAC and Council workshops
- A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and competitive positioning exercise resulting in key economic development opportunities

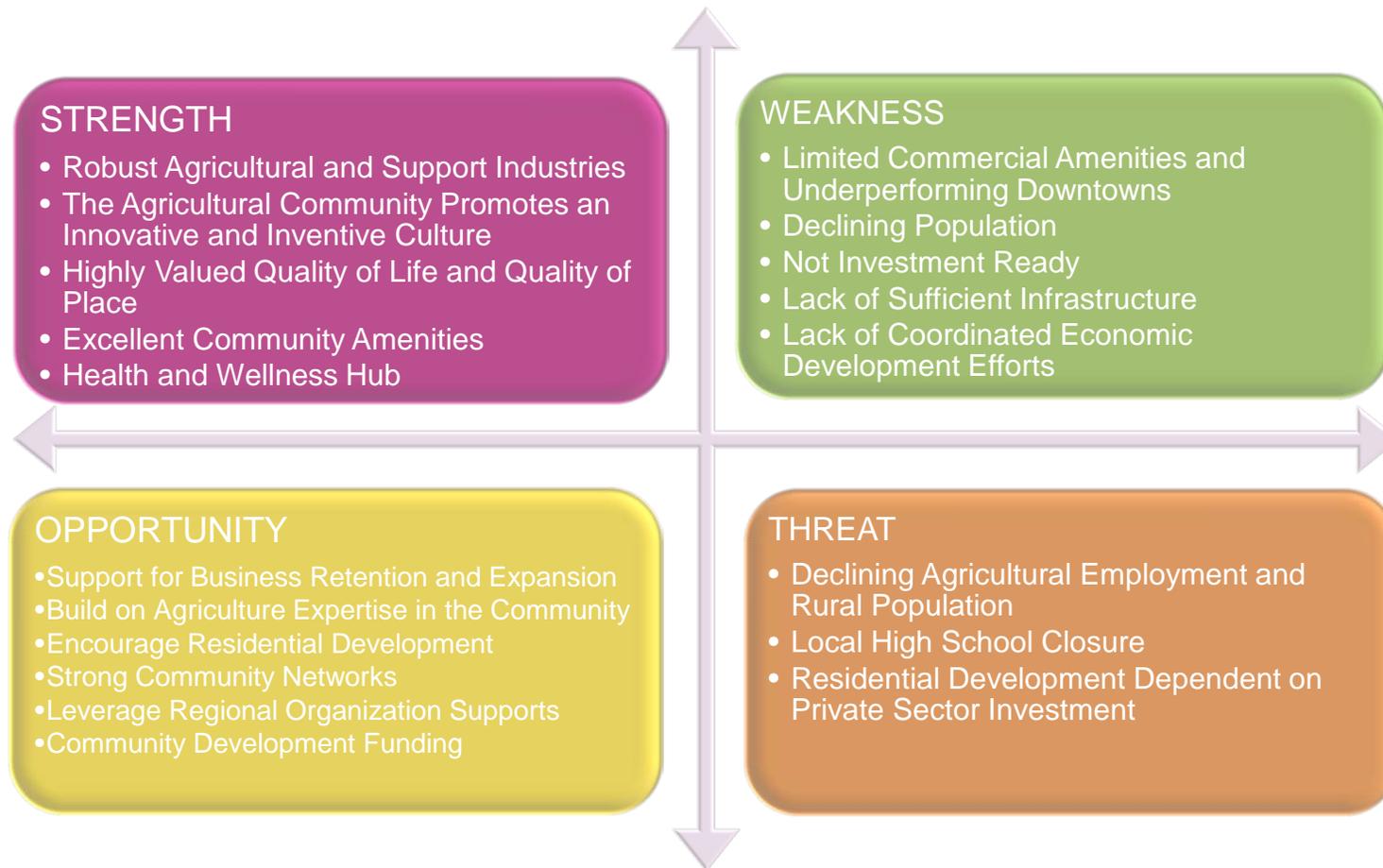
Figure 1 identifies North Middlesex's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that were derived by aggregating all of the collective findings from the processes identified above.

“North Middlesex needs to reach out to the agricultural base and continue to develop it. It is the main driver of the economy.”

North Middlesex Resident

The SWOT Analysis provides valuable insights into the potential contained in the community, and are instrumental in helping to frame the municipality's competitive positioning.

FIGURE 1: NORTH MIDDLESEX SWOT ANALYSIS



Building from the SWOT analysis, competitive advantages and disadvantages were identified and these played an important role in framing the economic development opportunities and actions to be pursued. These are identified below:

FIGURE 2: NORTH MIDDLESEX COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES	COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High employment levels ■ Higher income levels (community wealth) primarily from the agriculture sector ■ Proximity to coastal Lake Huron and the tourism market ■ Proximity to growing City of London ■ Strong community spirit with demonstrated success ■ Investments in community assets and amenities: Town Hall, libraries, recreation facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lacking the critical mass to support a diversified commercial base ■ Distance to major highway and larger urban centres (isolated) ■ Concentrated in agriculture with a decreasing employment base ■ Demographic shift – aging population and decreasing population ■ Residential development is stalled and dependent on private sector ■ Higher development charges than neighbouring jurisdictions

The strategic directions and resulting Action Plans and Recommended Initiatives are designed to cover a period that reflects the immediate term (ongoing actions, or initiatives that require speedy attention) and then looking out to a three, and five year window. The tables below outline the Economic Development Strategy action plans for items to be implemented over the life of the plan.

FIGURE 3: RECCOMENDED INITIATIVES BY STRATEGIC PRIORITY AND DATE ACTIONS ARE PLANNED TO COMMENCE

Recommended Initiative (Action)	Strategic Priority (Objective)	Timeline (initiated by)
Hire a dedicated staff person responsible for economic development services	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Immediate
Communications and branding plan	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 1 Year



Recommended Initiative (Action)	Strategic Priority (Objective)	Timeline (initiated by)
Provide staff support to Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) and make resources available to community groups with an economic development mandate	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Within 1 Year / Ongoing
Engage in private sector discussions with regard to extending high speed into rural areas	Infrastructure for Industry and Residents (including High Speed Internet)	Within 1 Year
Develop business workshops and programming specifically targeting the agricultural sector including agriculture specific funding programs, entrepreneurship, succession planning, alternative crops, agri-tourism and value added processing	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 1 Year / Ongoing
Review current development fees	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Within 1 Year
Provide economic development training to Municipal Council, Management and Staff, and Economic Development Advisory Committee	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Within 1 Year / Ongoing
Conduct an internet infrastructure audit to determine service levels, gaps, priorities and potential private sector partners	Infrastructure for Industry and Residents (including High Speed Internet)	Within 3 Years
Prepare a recreation master plan	Ensure the Community is Attractive to New Residents and Businesses	Within 3 Years
Conduct a formal business retention and expansion exercise	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years
Encourage and develop a strong community/business association	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years
Create and implement a Shop Local program in all areas	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years
Business grant or loan programs for new and existing business funded in part with Vibrancy Fund money	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years
Events promotion and tie-in with neighbouring communities	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 3 Years
Participate in Tradeshows and business to consumer, business to business opportunities at local venues	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 3 Years



Recommended Initiative (Action)	Strategic Priority (Objective)	Timeline (initiated by)
Undertake an Official Plan review and Lands Needs Assessment	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Within 3 Years
Develop tax incentives/promotions to encourage residential development	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Within 3 Years
Undertake Increased Tourism Promotion	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 3 – 5 Years
Solicit community participation in resident attraction, business retention and expansion and other economic development initiatives	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Ongoing
Promote assets outside of the community	Ensure the Community is Attractive to New Residents and Businesses	Ongoing
Ensure North Middlesex representation and participation in regional economic development programs	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Ongoing
Partner with other communities and levels of government	Infrastructure for Industry and Residents (including High Speed Internet)	Ongoing
Increase awareness and access to resources for business	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Ongoing
Support local businesses (get on the street) via consultation, workshops, communication, resources (e.g. Business plans)	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Ongoing
Make the municipality a destination	Ensure the Community is Attractive to New Residents and Businesses	Ongoing
Attract developers to make use of vacant residential land	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Ongoing

1.2 Terms and Definitions

The following section has been included as a guide to assist the reader in interpreting and absorbing the information contained in this report. It provides a brief description and definition of various concepts such as economic development, quality of life and



quality of place, along with the phenomena of place making in order to lend additional clarity and understanding as to why and how the recommended initiatives were developed for North Middlesex.

Economic Development

In its most basic form, economic development is about increasing the net wealth, economic benefit, or gain to a community or area. This means that increased levels of currency (or money) flow into a community adding to its economic base. The key to success is that increased levels of economic benefit (monies) return to the community through the export of goods and services (in excess of local consumption) and in turn have multiplier effects on the local economy through increased purchasing power, expendable incomes, business investment and increased employment. The more wealth, commerce, and investment a community can encourage and generate locally, the greater the benefits to the municipality, its population, businesses, and visitors.

The process of economic development has undergone a fairly significant transition over the last century. It has evolved from a traditional practice focused on attracting major employers to locate and invest in real estate and creating large, locally sourced workforces, to a primary focus on facilitating local business expansion and retaining companies in your community, to supporting entrepreneurial growth, incubation, and enabling innovation. Along this evolutionary line, the role of the Economic Development Practitioner has also changed in order to meet the demands and expectations of business, industry, and local governments as they tackle economic and environmental challenges, and the need for local municipalities to take a more proactive approach to harnessing and directing their own futures.

Technological advancement plays a large role in how modern communities approach economic development. Technological infrastructure (such as high speed internet and reliable telecommunications) is becoming a necessity in the most rural environments as interconnectedness, instantaneous communication, and business activity are now the norm. For North Middlesex, an economic development approach will need to include elements of all forms of economic development as it looks to make itself more attractive to new business, support diversification in the agricultural sector, foster ongoing entrepreneurial growth, and attract more highly skilled individuals to work and plant roots in the community.

Quality of Life / Quality of Place

Quality of place is defined as “the unique set of characteristics that define a place and make it attractive.”¹ Quality of place underpins the desire for people to want to stay or relocate to a specific community. Though it can be difficult to measure this concept in its entirety, there are some commonly used markers that help to determine whether there are likely to be increases or decreases in quality of place in a given community.

Quality of place is multidimensional and includes a number of factors such as the environment, cultural and recreational amenities, and the existing civic traditions. In addition, it is reflective of the entire region and not a single community. A healthy natural environment is seen as an important factor regarding the rural and more relaxed pace of North Middlesex’s quality of life. Healthy and plentiful natural and agrarian areas are assets that can be used to attract people to live, work, visit, and invest in the municipality.

Quality of life and place are linked and are important components to economic growth, prosperity, and competitiveness. This is increasingly important because North Middlesex is surrounded by other rural communities that are currently reinventing and rebranding themselves as the viable choice for living, commuting, recreating, and raising a family just outside of expanding larger urban centres.

Placemaking

Placemaking is a community and economic development tool that attempts to capitalize on local assets to create appealing and unique places where people want to live, work and play. Unlike other economic development tools, placemaking requires the support and participation of planning and economic development departments, and a re-thinking of land-use planning.

Historically, being a low cost community was the key to attracting business investment. Municipalities have waived development fees, frozen property tax rates and levied tax incentives as a means to attract businesses and investment. The challenge in today’s economy is that businesses that want to locate in a community in a timely manner, often require an increasingly skilled workforce, and rely on technology for their business operations including broadband infrastructure and local municipal services (water and sewer) that can accommodate their needs.

That said, the attributes of a community are an important consideration in the attraction and retention of both businesses and the workforce. The quality of a downtown, the quality and availability of housing stock, access to recreation and cultural amenities and

¹ Florida, Richard (2012) “What draws creative people? Quality of Place” Urbanland, Oct 11: <http://urbanland.uli.org/industry-sectors/what-draws-creative-people-quality-of-place/>



community and retail services all factor into the decision making. For this reason, placemaking has taken on increasing importance for communities (large or small), as a means of fostering a stronger bond between people and the places they live, work, and explore. This can be characterised as support for arts and cultural amenities, community gathering places, development of waterfront parks and trails, architectural design standards and historic preservation, or walkable streets.

The process of creative Placemaking can provide North Middlesex with an opportunity to rejuvenate structures and streetscapes, improve the viability of local business, and bring people together to celebrate the community they live in. This process is rooted in the local values, history, culture, and the natural environment that is unique to the area.

While there are a variety of elements and community assets in North Middlesex that can contribute to the concept of placemaking, they are predominantly local in nature. Therefore, it is important to establish local buy-in for participating in a broader regional placemaking approach to support the growth of cultural, heritage, and adventure tourism, inspire local business development and attraction, and encourage residential development that will be important to the Municipality in its efforts to build a strong sense of place and a sustainable economy.



1.3 Methodology

This section provides an overview of the methodological approach adopted to support the development of the Municipality of North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy.

Considering that this was the first formal economic development strategy for the Municipality of North Middlesex, it was important that comprehensive background research be conducted. This ensured that all relevant documents that may impact the development of a local strategy were taken into consideration. An assessment was also performed of different service providers in the area to help determine where potential existed for leveraging existing resources and regional collaboration on service delivery options. This supported the identification of external regional stakeholders that may have a role in facilitating and supporting the future economic development of the municipality.

To ensure that the municipality and project team were able to draw from the experience, insights, and perspectives of community stakeholders, a significant focus was placed on community engagement and outreach. Not only did this support local buy-in, more importantly, it ensured that local residents, businesses, community representatives, and community stakeholders were provided the opportunity to take an active role in shaping the municipality's future. In total, approximately 220 individuals contributed through a combination of one-on-one phone interviews, a community survey, and community Town Hall engagement sessions.

Strategic planning workshops with the Council, Senior Management Staff, and the Economic Development Committee rounded off the consultation process, and provided input that built on the feedback and insights collected from the broader community.

MDB Insight also engaged the community of North Middlesex by holding two 'Economic Development 101' workshops to help inform municipal staff and residents about what economic development means, basic economic development principles, and how these might be implemented at the community level.

The key findings have been incorporated into a set of recommended initiatives, accompanied by detailed action plans, and initiative specific performance measures that can be used by the Municipality to drive its economic development agenda forward over the course of the next five years.



2) Background Review

Current Economic Development Policy Framework
Relevant Strategies and Plans Reviewed
Common Threads Analysis

HomeTown
Memories

Bed & Breakfast

Tara Staff
1879

294-1118

2 Background Review

Economic development has a significant impact and effect across many policy streams and areas of municipal activity. In a local environment, the policy framework guides, influences and supports the socio-economic landscape, community and cultural entities, and groups and individuals that make up a municipality. These groups often act as critical stakeholders and valuable partners in community building, and these voices must be effectively incorporated into municipal decision making.

The following sections in the Background Review explore the existing strategic plans and initiatives of the Municipality of North Middlesex and those of groups and organizations that directly affect local public policy considerations. They also help to inform the North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy, as they contain key insights into factors that affect labour market development, planning environments, and strategic directions that influence the economy of North Middlesex.

Combined with the findings that emerge from consultation efforts and stakeholder engagement, key findings from the background review are incorporated into components of subsequent sections of this Plan, such as the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis and Competitiveness Assessment.

Ultimately, these findings will inform the North Middlesex's Economic Development Strategy and provide Council with a roadmap of key priorities, actions, and performance measures rooted in a firm understanding of where North Middlesex currently is and where it wants to be.

2.1 Current Economic Development Policy Framework

The diagram in Figure 4 (below) shows the relationship between the various sets of policies and initiatives/policy areas that impact the Municipality of North Middlesex policy framework from an economic development perspective at a local level. The smaller circles surrounding the centre (representing the framework) illustrate how select policies need to be taken into consideration from a strategic and tactical perspective when planning short, medium, and longer-term policies.

For the purposes of this section, the framework diagram does not focus on Federal or Provincial initiatives related to potential incentives, grants, or macro-level policies. The intention here is to uncover the impact and influence that internal and external local level policies have on municipal economic development, and the potential for synergies and thematic alignment.

For example, the County of Middlesex's Official Plan must be taken into account when establishing key policy objectives in the Municipality of North Middlesex's Official Plan because there is a direct and regulatory relationship in the two-tier municipal structure.

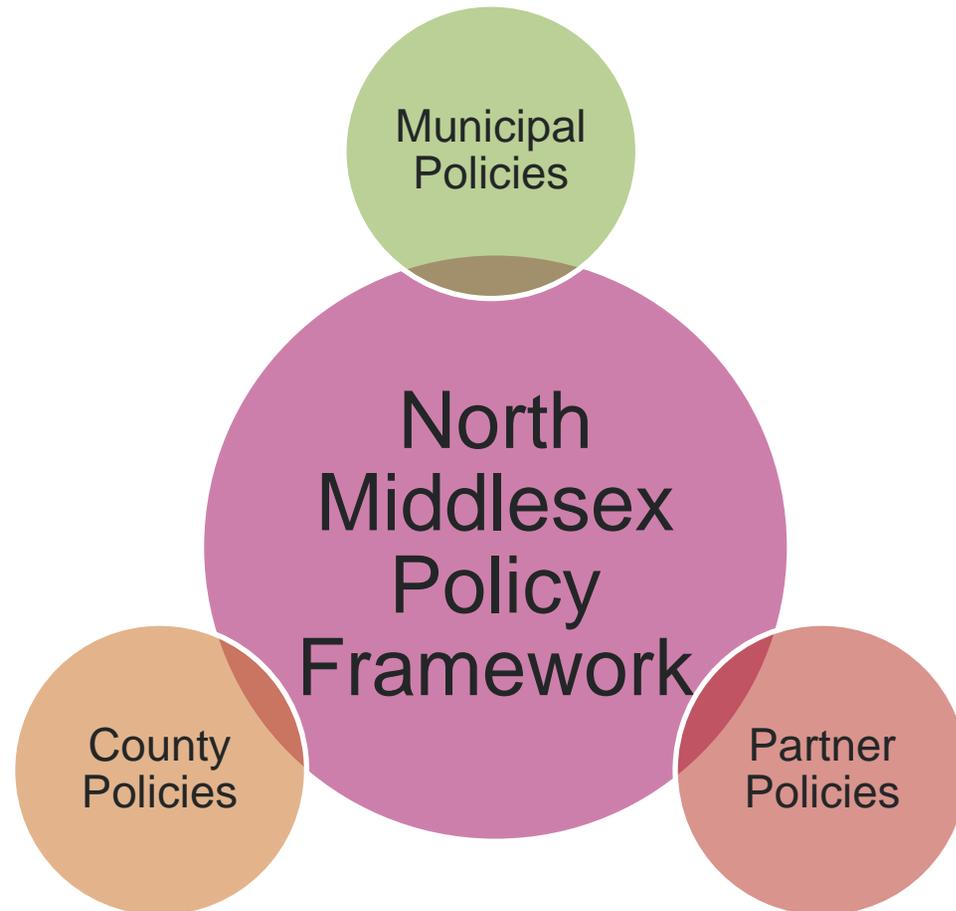
As a key supporting document in driving growth across the county, it is important that there is strong alignment between the County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategy and the lower tier municipal strategic plans.

For instance, the priorities that relate to "Broadening [the] Business Retention + Expansion" programming efforts is directly of benefit to North Middlesex, and should be approached in a collaborative, and mutually reinforcing manner, both from a policy and a delivery perspective.

Further, the County's Industrial Land Needs Study highlights the need for a County-wide land use policy, a review framework for land conversions, and identifies that North Middlesex is in a surplus position with respect to forecast growth and demand.

Numerous policies, including the County's Agri-Food Economic Impact Report highlight the potential contained across the value chain at a local level, particularly how North Middlesex can continue to position itself well in primary production. This also aligns with internal (municipal) policies, such as the Municipality's 2012 Strategic Plan, which contains very specific objectives related to establishing an Economic Development Strategy that will strengthen the

FIGURE 4: POLICY FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM



agricultural sector. In addition, Provincial policies such as the *Ontario Places to Grow Initiative* impact on local planning decisions.

Examining the Municipality's 2012 Strategic Plan closer, there are a series of 'economic development' strategic directions and objectives that need to be considered in the development of the current plan. These also intersect with other internal policies related to planning and infrastructure development. All of which must be aligned from a budgeting, resourcing, and service delivery perspective.

Finally, there are external, or partner policies, such as the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board labour market strategy which highlights specific priority areas related to training, employment, and skills development requirements in the broader economic region that includes North Middlesex.

The following section provides a more detailed overview of the most relevant local policies, and examines them for potential overlap and commonality. Common themes are identified, and cross referenced across the various policies and illustrated in a matrix that highlights specific areas which should be taken into consideration when developing the North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy.

2.2 Relevant Strategies and Plans Reviewed

The following plans, policies, and reports were analysed for the background review:

- Municipality of North Middlesex Official Plan, March 2004
- Municipality of North Middlesex Strategic Plan, March 2012
- Municipality of North Middlesex Asset Management Plan Final Report, March 2014
- County of Middlesex Official Plan, 1997
- County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategic Plan, January 2014
- County of Middlesex Employment Land Needs Study, April 2012
- Foreign Direct Investment Report for Middlesex County, July 2011
- Working Together to Build Tomorrow's Workforce: Defining a Labour Market Strategy for the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Region, September 2014
- County of Middlesex Agri-food Economic Impact Report, March 2015
- Middlesex County Report on Tourism, June 2009
- Integrated Community Sustainable Plan for the Municipality of North Middlesex, April 2014

2.3 Common Threads Analysis

As mentioned in the description of the current policy framework (section 2.1), the following section identifies key themes that emerged from the various policies and documents assessed above. These documents have been analysed comparatively to uncover areas of thematic overlap. The policies were then catalogued in correlation with the common themes in order to observe patterns – in essence, to find the ‘common threads’ among them.

The following observations are important, as they highlight themes that are strongly represented in the current policy framework internally, and where external policies are aligned with these areas of importance. Further, it also allows the identification of gaps that may exist where key themes and areas of importance do not currently have prominence in the municipal policy environment.

As the research process progresses, and themes emerge from the outcomes of the engagement, SWOT, and competitiveness assessment phases, if these ‘gaps’ represent important objectives, or priorities identified by the community’s economic development stakeholders, they illuminate policy areas that should be examined further to ensure effective alignment with future priorities. These critical understandings are then incorporated into the development phase of goal setting and establishing strategic directions, objectives, and action planning for the current strategy.

The common threads identified among the policies and documents examined above include:

- Tourism and agri-tourism potential (opportunities)
- Importance of collaborative economic development service delivery (business retention, expansion, and attraction)
- Investment and community marketing (including brand development)
- Strategic infrastructure improvement (to support economic development and leverage existing investment)
- Value-added agricultural and agri-food opportunities (along the value chain)
- Preserve and expand primary agricultural industry (key local strength)
- Serviced and available land (readiness to facilitate development)
- Municipality is investment ready (from an organizational and service delivery perspective)
- Sustainable economic development
- Skilled and talented workforce available (including youth employment)
- Development maximizes access to transportation infrastructure

These themes are illustrated in Figure 5 below in an easy to read matrix format.

This list highlights that there are many themes that hold equal weight (or frequency) with which they appear; however, the most common theme is certainly the value placed on maintaining, preserving, and advancing the primary agricultural strengths found in North Middlesex.

Based on the analysis below, the common threads that appear most in the current policy framework are (totals shown in brackets):

- Preserve and expand primary agricultural industry strengths (8)
- Collaborative economic development service delivery (7)
- Strategic infrastructure investment (7)
- Investment and community marketing (5)
- Serviced and available land (5)
- Municipality is investment ready (5)
- Development maximizes transportation infrastructure (5)

It should be understood that all common threads hold importance, and as mentioned above, the gaps that can be recognized in the matrix below, such as the infrequent representation of workforce development and the importance of a skilled local talent pool highlight that this should be an area of attention when examining the complete research findings.

The understandings presented here will be drawn upon during the various research phases, and will be utilized during the strategic planning workshops, the articulation of potential opportunities, and the design of key directions, recommendations, and action planning.

FIGURE 5: COMPARATIVE MATRIX OF NORTH MIDDLESEX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Theme	Total Threads	Municipality of North Middlesex Official Plan, Office Consolidation June 2014	Municipality of North Middlesex Strategic Plan, March 2012	Municipality of North Middlesex Asset Management Plan Final Report, March 2014	County of Middlesex Official Plan, Consolidated August 2006	County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategic Plan, January 2014	County of Middlesex Employment Land Needs Study, April 2012	Foreign Direct Investment Report for Middlesex County, July 2011	Labour Market Strategy for the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Region, September 2014	County of Middlesex Agri-Food Economic Impact Report, March 2015	Middlesex County Report on Tourism, June 2009	Integrated Community Sustainable Plan for the Municipality of North Middlesex, April 2014	North Middlesex Community Profile, July 2015
Tourism and Agri-Tourism Opportunities	4	✔				✔					✔	✔	
Collaborative Economic Development Service Delivery	7		✔		✔	✔	✔	✔			✔		✔
Investment and Community Marketing	5		✔			✔	✔	✔			✔		
Strategic Infrastructure Investment	7	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔					✔	
Value-added Agricultural and Agri-food Opportunities (value chain)	4		✔			✔				✔		✔	
Preserve and Expand Primary Agricultural Industry Strengths	8	✔	✔		✔	✔		✔		✔		✔	✔
Serviced and Available Land	5	✔	✔		✔		✔						✔
Municipality is Investment Ready	5		✔			✔	✔	✔					✔
Sustainable Economic Development	4	✔			✔	✔						✔	
Skilled and Talented Workforce	2					✔			✔				
Development Maximizes Transportation Infrastructure	5	✔	✔		✔		✔					✔	

Source: MDB Insight, 2015.





3) The North Middlesex Economy

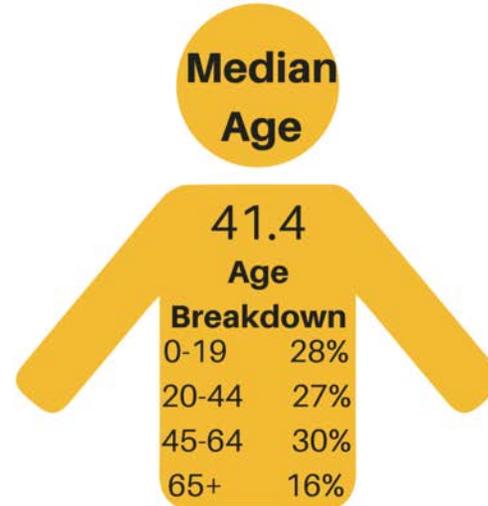
Economic Overview of North Middlesex
Key Sector Analysis

3 The North Middlesex Economy

Population Growth



2011 Age Profile



2011 Average Dwelling Value



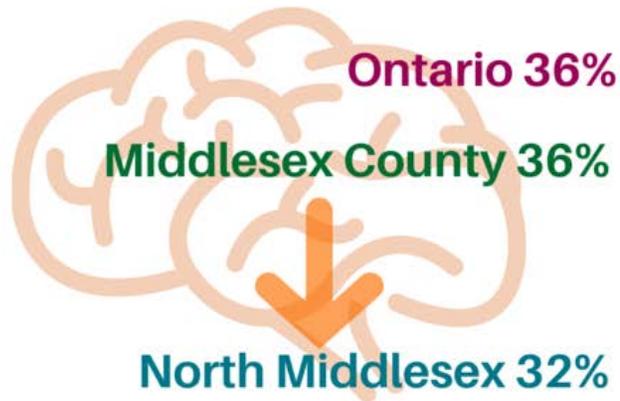
2011 Household Income



Source: Statistics Canada National Household Survey 2011, Census 2006 and 2011



2011 Post-Secondary Education



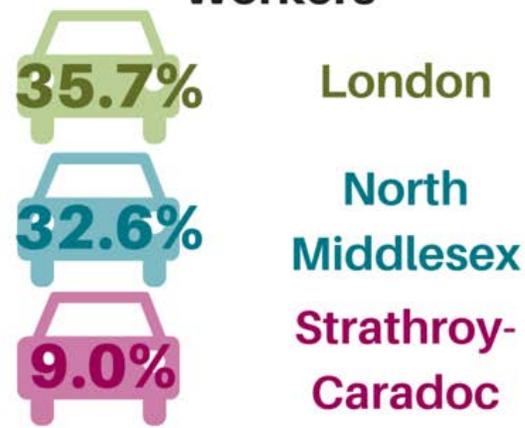
2011 Apprenticeship & Trades Education



Top Industries by Labour Force



Commuter Patterns of North Middlesex Workers



Source: Statistics Canada National Household Survey 2011



Total Number of Self-Employed



Top Industries by Number of Businesses



Top Industries by Self-Employment



Agriculture	50%
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	11%
Construction	5%

Business Growth by Industry

Rank	Industry	Increase of Businesses (2008-2013)
1	Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	34
2	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	21
3	Management of Companies & Enterprises	15
4	Finance & Insurance	7

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Patterns December 2008, 2013



3.1 Key Sector Analysis

Building off of the economic overview provided above (and the detailed analysis available in the Appendix: Technical Report), the following section provides an overview of trends and factors that may affect the future employment potential of the key sectors in North Middlesex. This analysis helps us to understand the impact these important sectors could be expected to have on the local economy. It also allows the Municipality to anticipate the opportunities these sectors could provide and challenges they may face. North Middlesex can then determine how best to support its local companies in these key sectors, and allow for the development of appropriate tactics to build upon the strengths, mitigate the weaknesses, and leverage the opportunities.

As identified through the assessment of North Middlesex's economy, the leading industry sectors for employment in 2011 were:

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting 505 jobs (14%)
- Health Care and Social Assistance 455 jobs (12.7%)
- Construction 380 jobs (10.6%)
- Manufacturing 325 jobs (9.0%)
- Retail Trade 305 jobs (8.5%)²

Each of these key sectors are analysed further below.

3.1.1 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting is the dominant industry sector in North Middlesex representing 14% of all jobs in the municipality. The *Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Report 2012* from Worktrends.ca provided the following overview of the agriculture sector in Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford Counties:

"Nationally and provincially, the sector went through several rounds of consolidations resulting in fewer farms with larger operating areas, larger average number of animals per farm, larger capital values, [and] larger average number of operating equipment per farm. This trend suggests continuous efforts to improve productivity, gain economic efficiency and remain competitive internationally."

² Statistics Canada, National Household Survey (NHS) Profile, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE

“The industrial structure of the sector is heavily skewed towards self-employment and micro-establishments (1-4 employees). [...] The improvements in the sector productivity are attributed mainly to the increased level of mechanization in the sector, the intensity of intermediate input use and application of research and technology. All these factors lead over time to a major contraction in the number of hours worked in agriculture sector.”³

These observations are consistent with the economic situation in North Middlesex, where although the agricultural sector remains the dominant employment sector, it has declined by 215 jobs since 2006.

The increasing mechanization of the sector and larger farm sizes has another implication for North Middlesex. The number of families and homes on farms is decreasing. When farm properties become available, they are acquired by farmers for the additional acreage and the homes are surplus to the purchasers' needs. Often these homes are demolished, thereby reducing the municipality's population and school enrolment and spreading the tax burden across a smaller number of residents. Those farmers that remain, however, are managing larger operations and the average household income in North Middlesex exceeds the County average. Further, a challenge is presented in that the higher than average household income is currently an indicator which affects grant opportunities for infrastructure funding.

Of the 354 business establishments in the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting sector, 307 are indeterminate or non-employer businesses. Of the 47 sector businesses with employees, only 1 establishment had more than 20 employees. The majority (33) had 1 to 4 employees and a further 10 had 5 to 9 employees. *The high ratio of non-employer businesses is consistent with Statistics Canada's observation that “Self-employed farmers contribute significantly to the higher self-employment rates in rural and small town areas.”⁴* In 2010, 21% of Canada's rural and small town workforce was self-employed⁵. This is evidenced in North Middlesex, where in 2013 there were 771 business establishments of which 67% were indeterminate or non-employer businesses⁶.

Ultimately, these findings highlight the importance of providing the local agricultural industries with self-employment and entrepreneurship services, along with broader sector-related supports to encourage increased business growth and assist local agricultural managers and operators with securing the types of skills and workforce needs they require to meet new challenges.

³ Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Report, 2012, pg. 4. Worktrends.ca at Elgin Middlesex and Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board. Accessed Nov. 19, 2015.

⁴ Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin, 21-006-x, Vol. 9 No. 1, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/21-006-x/2012001/finding-resultats-eng.htm> Accessed Nov. 19, 2015.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Statistics Canada. Canadian Business Patterns, December 2013.

3.1.2 Health Care and Social Assistance

The Health Care and Social Assistance sector locally accounts for 12.7% of all jobs in North Middlesex. According to the Worktrends.ca report on the Health Care and Social Assistance sector, employment is concentrated in micro (1-4 jobs) and small firms (5-99 jobs). The main factors expected to impact this sector are demographic shifts, serving populations at risk and fiscal control. These are presented in more detail below:

Demographic shifts

“(The) Canadian population age structure is changing: the population is aging. The number of seniors will double during next 20 years, a change that will increase significantly the healthcare costs. The presumption is that the healthcare costs for a senior are about three times higher than for average person. For example in Ontario only, it was estimated (Ontario Government, 2012) that by 2030 the health care costs will be 50 percent higher than in 2012.”⁷

Serving the at risk population

“In conjunction with the population shift, Canada has to pay attention to the large number of people considered at risk due to their lower level of income”... “Main population categories considered at risk are children, seniors, single mothers, youth, and other.”⁸

Fiscal control and cost reduction

“The numbers are impressive, no matter the age, or gender, category. The cost implications for the Health Care and Social Assistance Sector can be easily drawn from this unique perspective that foresees higher workload for the sector. However, a superior management and technology upgrade could come to the rescue.”⁹

North Middlesex’s situation is an amplification of the national trends in health care and social assistance. The population in North Middlesex is older than the provincial average and could be expected to create even greater demand for local health care services and workers. The nursing and residential care facilities sub-sector accounted for 180 of the 455 jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance.

⁷ Health Care and Social Assistance Report, March 2015, pg. 6. Worktrends.ca at Elgin Middlesex and Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board. Accessed Nov. 19, 2015.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Many of the stakeholders consulted for this report recommended targeting opportunities arising from the growing senior population. Providing additional residential options for seniors would address the local need for different types of residences while increasing the market for a growing health and wellness cluster in the community.

In an effort to reduce costs, health care providers are exploring opportunities to provide services in home, clinical, and non-hospital settings. This trend would further support North Middlesex's potential for stimulating a health and wellness cluster.

3.1.3 Construction

The Construction sector locally was responsible for 380 jobs or 10.6% of the North Middlesex workforce in 2011. The Construction sector is characterized by a high percentage of indeterminate or non-employer businesses. A full 35 of the 78 construction businesses in North Middlesex, representing 44% of the business establishments, are non-employer businesses¹⁰.

Residential construction is expected to grow at a moderate but steady rate. As reported by BuildForce Canada, *"Household formation ... is expected to rise over the medium term to 2020, then cycle down later in the period in line with slower population growth. Housing starts, and thereby new residential construction investment, generally follow this trend. Investment in household renovations is expected to rise steadily over the outlook period."*¹¹

Construction businesses are complimentary to the agriculture sector with many individuals supplementing their income by working in both sectors. The proximity of the large urban centres of London and Sarnia further supports the independent business operators' ability to live in the rural and small town setting while accessing larger construction markets nearby.

3.1.4 Manufacturing

The Manufacturing sector is responsible for 325 jobs in North Middlesex, which reflected a decline in employment from 395 jobs in 2006. The Worktrends.ca report *Manufacturing: A Study of Perceptions, Issues and Possibilities for the London Economic Region 2013* reported that despite widespread layoffs and decline in the manufacturing sector as a result of the recession of 2008-2009, manufacturing is rebounding. Some of the reasons for the rebound are particularly relevant for small, rural based communities in the London Economic Region such as North Middlesex. These are highlighted below:

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. Canadian Business Patterns, December 2013.

¹¹ Preliminary Investment Trends Report ONTARIO: 2015–2024, BuildForce Canada, p. 6. www.constructionforecasts.ca Accessed Nov 22, 2015.

“A few large employers are gone but many small ones are growing. True, the loss of just a few large employers can devastate a community and even a region, but economic growth in all sectors is largely driven by small business, including manufacturing. Likewise, small and medium sized manufacturers generally have a greater flexibility than large-scale operations in how they operate, what customers they service, and what they produce.”

“Local ownership with a commitment to community. Small and medium sized businesses generally are locally owned and managed by people from the local community. Locally owned manufacturers tend to be committed to the communities they are in, as they do not have the capacity to juggle operations by ramping up production in some facilities while closing others around the globe. In addition, a greater commitment to the community generally means a greater interest in the personal and professional wellbeing of their employees. Multinationals tend not to have the same commitment to communities, and more than likely will make decisions based on what is best for investors.”¹²

The manufacturing businesses in North Middlesex have proven that they are resilient, having survived the economic downturn of 2008-2009. They are more likely to be committed to the community and because of their size are more nimble than a large manufacturing operation. Currently these businesses may not be receiving sufficient economic development services from the municipality. Local manufacturers could benefit from a variety of services including access to government funding, entrepreneurship supports, training programs, export development, and business to business networking.

3.1.5 Retail Trade

The Retail Trade sector represents 305 local jobs or 8.5% of total employment in North Middlesex. Employment in retail trade is down slightly from 345 jobs in 2006. The local share of employment in the Retail Trade sector is below the provincial average for non-metro locations, where general trends reflect that 15% of employment is in wholesale and retail trade. North Middlesex’s retail sector suffers as a result of a large commuting workforce (67%) leaving the municipality (and shopping en route) and the relative proximity to abundant retail commercial amenities and selection just 20 minutes away in London.

Further, the Canadian retail sector is in a period of major disruption with e-commerce commanding larger shares of all retail sales. The clothing category has been particularly hard hit with major retailers facing intense competition. Local retailers need to compete in a smaller market with larger retailers who can offer greater selection. Retailers that can survive in this volatile marketplace will need to provide distinct offerings, exceptional personal service, convenience, and a community connection. Local retailers in North Middlesex would benefit from increased awareness and access to local services such as business planning,

¹² Manufacturing, A Study of Perceptions, Issues and Possibilities for the London Economic Region, August 2013, www.worktrends.ca Accessed Nov 22, 2015.

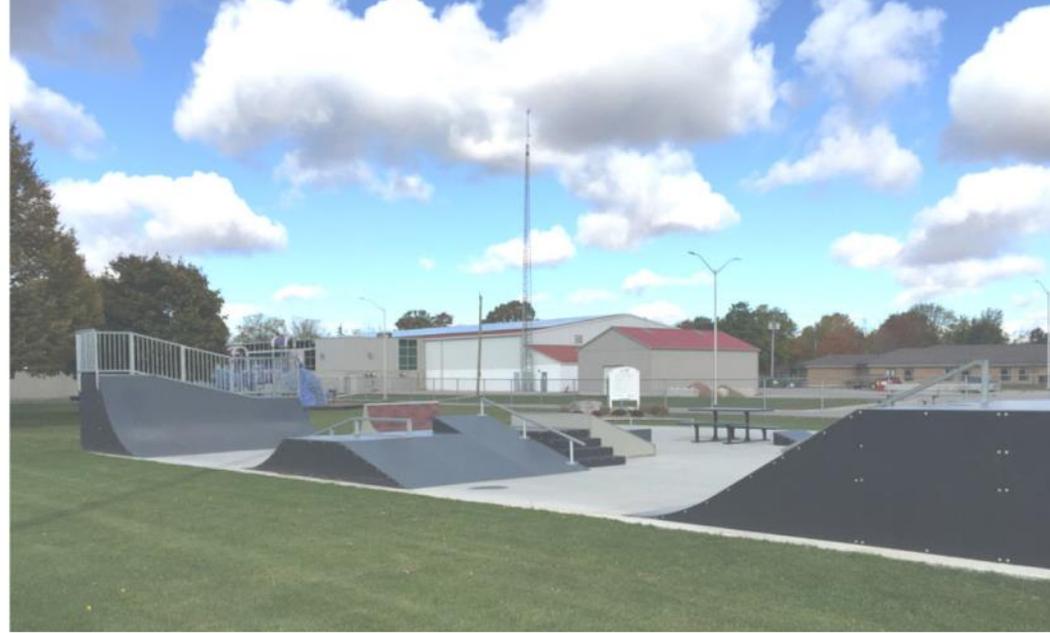


mentoring, façade improvements, shop local programming, and coordinated marketing programs. Some retailers could also expand their market through e-commerce platforms and training programs to support their ability to better understand how to leverage these business elements.



4) Regional Community Assets

Regional Assets
Community Assets
Cultural Assets
Development Lands



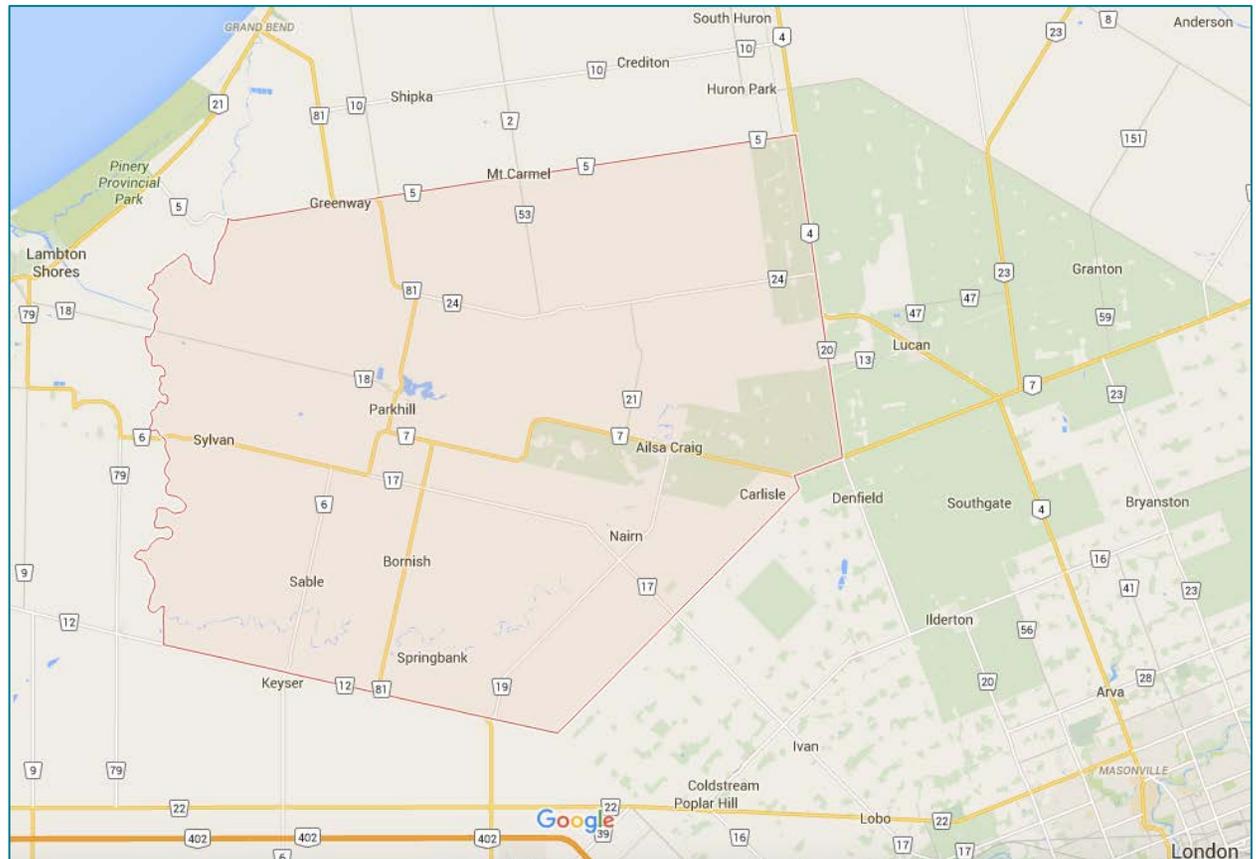
4 Regional and Community Assets

Regional and community assets are those items, locations or conditions that could be leveraged to support North Middlesex's economic growth. The Asset-Based Community Development Institute considers community assets as "the building blocks of sustainable economic development"¹³. Those building blocks include the skills of local residents, local associations and the support of local institutions. This section summarizes the local and regional assets, which are unique to North Middlesex with the potential to contribute to the municipality's Economic Development Strategy.

4.1 Regional Assets

North Middlesex is a 20-minute drive from the northern boundary of London, Ontario with a population of 366,511¹⁴. London is an industrial and commercial hub for southwestern Ontario and the population of the city has grown 3.9 % since 2006. The nearby communities of Lucan and Ilderton

FIGURE 6: NORTH MIDDLESEX AND SURROUNDING AREA



Source: Google maps, Adapted by MDB Insight, 2015

¹³ Asset-Based Community Development Institute, www.abcdinstitute.org

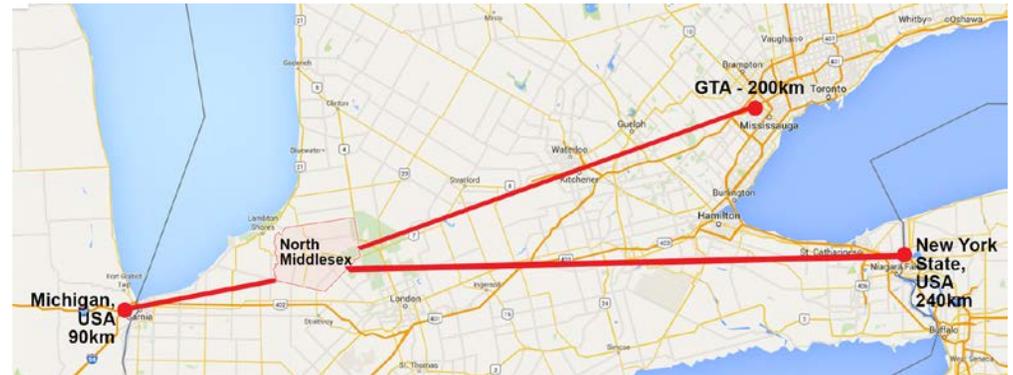
¹⁴ Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

have enjoyed significant population growth as workers seek alternatives to living in the growing city of London.

Highway 402 is located just south of North Middlesex and provides easy access to US markets in less than one hour. Travelling east on Highway 402 will take travellers to Highway 401, the east – west thruway for Southern Ontario, in 40 minutes.

North Middlesex is also located just 20 minutes from the popular tourist destinations of Grand Bend, Lake Huron and the Pinery Provincial Park. North Middlesex benefits from this as a large share of the travelling public and tourists drive through Parkhill en route to various tourist destinations.

FIGURE 7: NORTH MIDDLESEX PROXIMITY TO MAJOR MARKETS



Source: Google Maps 2016

4.2 Community Assets

Community Assets are a foundation for community improvement. They are the internal resources within the community that can be leveraged to achieve the community’s goals. This exercise begins the work of identifying those important assets that can be utilized to help grow the local economy. For the purposes of this Economic Development Strategy, this report considered the following assets:

- Agricultural related businesses
- Cultural Assets
- Schools, Recreation Centres & Parks
- Health and Wellness Assets



4.2.1 Agricultural Related Businesses and Services

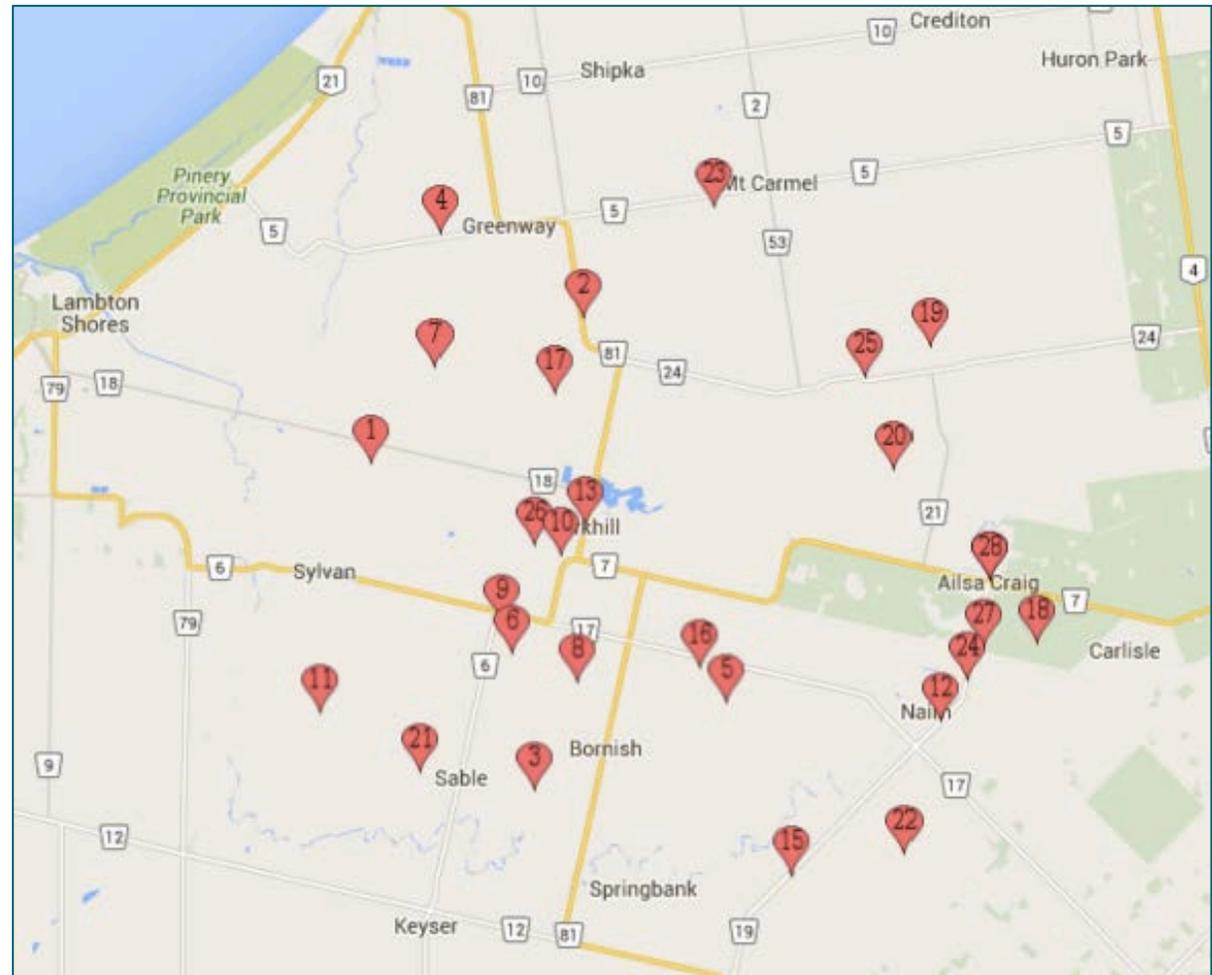
North Middlesex has a total area of 147,798 acres or 588.15 km². With a population of 6,658, the municipality is home to 11.3 residents per square kilometre. The density of residents per square kilometre is low due to the largely rural nature of the Municipality. However, within Ailsa Craig and Parkhill the density of residents per square kilometre increases as these are the urbanized areas.

Agriculture is a dominant industry and cultural focus for the community. *Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting* is the largest industry sector representing 14% of the total workforce in North Middlesex. In that sector the subsector of farms represents 505 jobs. The primary crops in North Middlesex are corn, soybeans and winter wheat.

In addition to the farms there are a range of businesses that support the agricultural sector including machinery, agrochemicals, feed, transportation, drainage, storage and processing. The North Middlesex business directory includes 29 agricultural related businesses.

The table below (Figure 9) lists the local agricultural firms identified above and itemizes them in corresponding order with the adjacent map.

FIGURE 8: AGRICULTURAL RELATED BUSINESSES AND SERVICES



Source: Google maps, adapted by MDB Insight, 2015



FIGURE 9: NORTH MIDDLESEX AGRICULTURAL FIRMS 2015

North Middlesex Agricultural Firms			
	Company / Organization	Address	Community
1	Cornita Farms	873 Parkhill Dr	Parkhill
2	Christopher Eagleson	35290 Grand Bend Rd	Parkhill
3	Fredmar Farms Ltd	2242 Elmtree Dr	Parkhill
4	Huron Grain Ltd.	1237 Greenway Dr	Parkhill
5	Fort Rose Maple Company	27382 Coldstream Rd	Parkhill
6	Hoggerbrugge Farms	28778 Coldstream Rd	Parkhill
7	JR Farms Incorporated	1200 West Corner Dr	Parkhill
8	Kenvalley Farms Ltd	2090 Coldstream Rd	Parkhill
9	Kustermans Adrian Farms	1825 Elginfield Rd	Parkhill
10	McGee Farm Services	2101 Elliot Dr	Parkhill
11	Namdac Farms Inc	31415 Sylvan Rd	Parkhill
12	Hemming Farm Equipment	11089 Petty St	Ailsa Craig
13	Flat Acres Ltd	32090 Center Rd	Parkhill
14	Ausableview Farms Inc	RR 1	Ailsa Craig
15	Beechwood Agri Services Inc	9821 Petty St	Ailsa Craig
16	Porky Acres Jack P Willemse Ltd	27553 Nairn Rd	Parkhill
17	Porkhill Farms Ltd	1902 W Corner Dr	Parkhill
18	Twilight Acre Farms Limited	26552 New Ontario Rd	Ailsa Craig
19	Robinson Farm Drainage Limited	34834 Cassidy Rd	Ailsa Craig
20	Honeyland Ag Services	3918 West Corner Dr	Ailsa Craig
21	Wideman's Farm Drainage Ltd	1571 Elmtree Dr	Parkhill
22	Barex Acres	10405 Argyle St	Ailsa Craig
23	Rutten Family Farms Ltd	2889 Mt Carmel Dr	Parkhill
25	Wright's Seeds & Feeder Service Inc	3624 McGillivray Dr	Ailsa Craig
26	Yellow Gold Farms Ltd	1932 Elliot Dr	Parkhill
27	Hensall District Co-Operative Incorporated	26831 New Ontario Rd.	Ailsa Craig
28	Roelands' Farms Ltd		Ailsa Craig
29	Engel Turkey Farm	11347 Petty St	Ailsa Craig



4.3 Cultural Assets

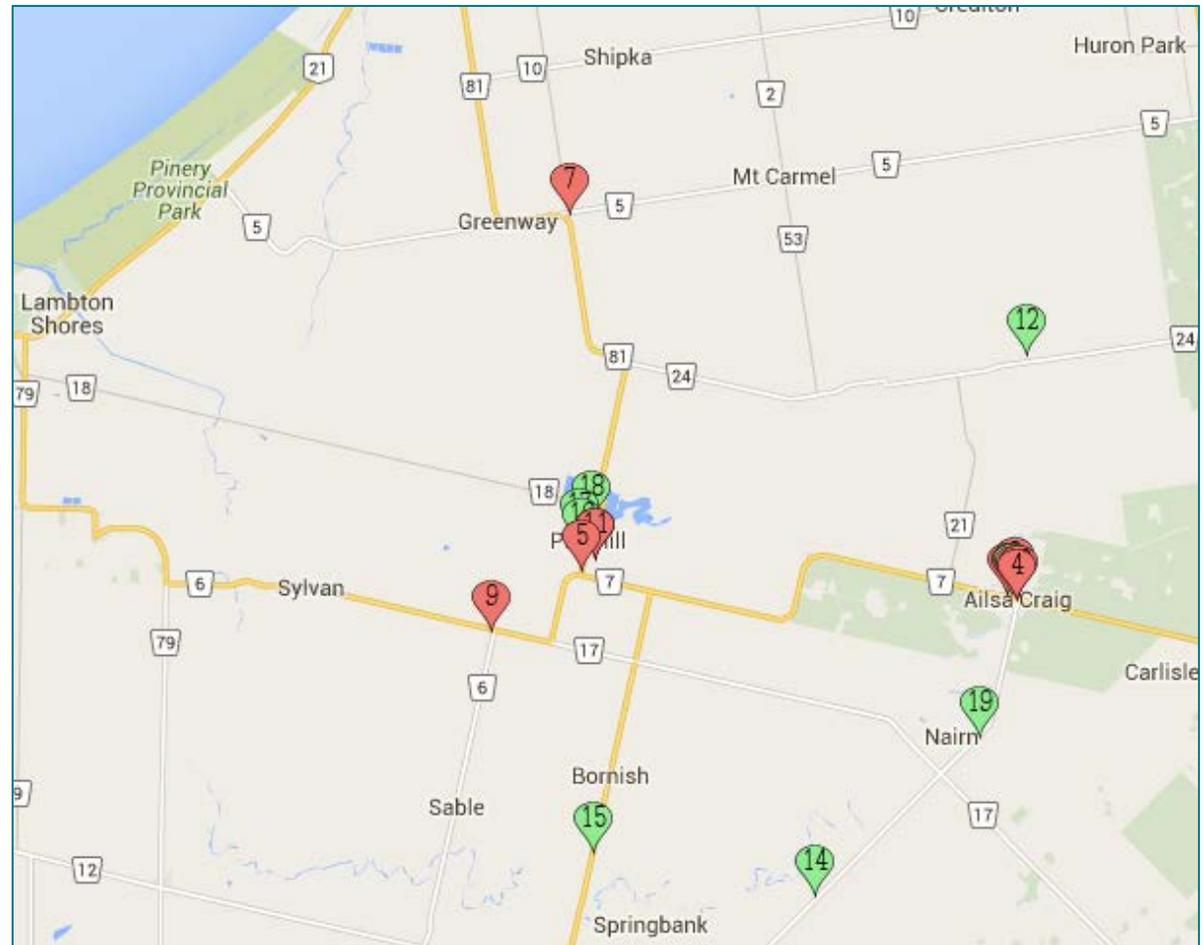
Cultural assets deliver cultural amenities and products, promote a sense of place and identity and enhance quality of life including performance spaces, exhibit spaces, heritage sites, libraries, places of worship and other locations where residents and visitors undertake collaborative, creative pursuits. As illustrated in Figure 10, the communities of Parkhill and Ailsa Craig are the centre of cultural activities in North Middlesex.

There are 19 physical cultural assets identified in North Middlesex. Also important is the number of grassroots cultural organizations in the community.

The North Middlesex community profile includes 18 cultural and community organizations. These organizations could be further detailed through a subsequent cultural mapping exercise.

The table below in Figure 11 lists the various cultural assets that are plotted on the map to the right with numbering that corresponds with the various icons.

FIGURE 10: NORTH MIDDLESEX CULTURAL ASSETS MAP



Source: Google maps, Adapted by MDB Insight, 2015



FIGURE 11: NORTH MIDDLESEX CULTURAL ASSETS 2015

North Middlesex Cultural Assets			
	Cultural Asset	Address	Community
1	Ailsa Craig Masonic Lodge	131 Main St.	Ailsa Craig
2	Parkhill Masonic Lodge	225 McLeod St.	Parkhill
3	North Middlesex Historical Society Walker Research Room and Trinity Chapel	158 Church St	Ailsa Craig
4	North Middlesex Historical Society Donald Hughes Annex	169 George St.	Ailsa Craig
5	Middlesex County Library - Parkhill	9 Parkhill Main Street	Parkhill
6	Friends of Ye Olde Towne Hall	160 Ailsa Craig Main St.	Ailsa Craig
7	Corbett Community Centre	35914 Corbett Rd. R. R. #8	Parkhill
8	Middlesex County Library - Ailsa Craig	147 Ailsa Craig Main St	Ailsa Craig
9	West Williams Community Centre	32217 Kerwood Road	Parkhill
10	Ailsa Craig Community Centre	225 McLeod St	Ailsa Craig
11	North Middlesex District Community Centre	225 McLeod St.	Parkhill
12	Ailsa Craig United Church	156 Ailsa Craig Main Street	Ailsa Craig
13	Brinsley United Church	34743 Brinsley Road	Ailsa Craig
14	Sacred Heart Catholic Church	159 Ann Street	Parkhill
15	Knox Presbyterian Church	31146 Centre Road	Parkhill
16	St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church	9906 Petty Street	Ailsa Craig
17	St. James Anglican Church	155 Broadway Street	Parkhill
18	Grace Bible Chapel	277 Parkhill Main Street	Parkhill
19	Nairn Mennonite Church	26459 Bear Creek Road	Ailsa Craig



4.4 Schools, Recreation Facilities and Park Assets

Schools, recreation facilities and parks are assets that provide centres for organized sports, community events, cultural events and passive recreation. These destinations are another important element in determining a community’s quality of place and the quality of life for its residents.

There are nine parks of varying sizes in the municipality. The community is home to one high school, four elementary schools and two pre-schools (see Figure 12 below).

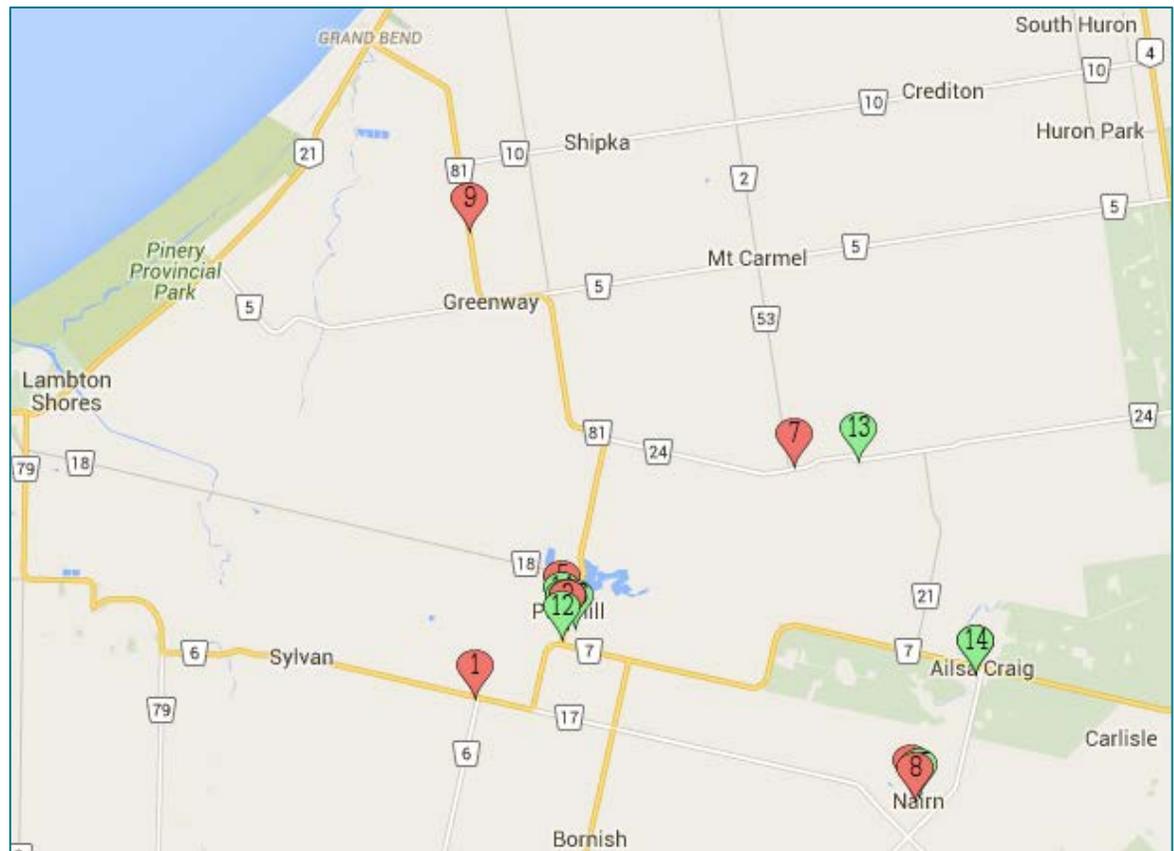
Health Care and Wellness Services

Many of the focus group participants and stakeholders referenced the growing health and wellness cluster developing in North Middlesex.

There are 13 related businesses and service organizations located in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig including seniors’ long term care and residences, pharmacies, medical clinics, YMCA, yoga, organic food, counselling and alternative health care services serving North Middlesex and the surrounding municipalities.

Figure 13 provides a list of North Middlesex recreation centres, parks, and schools that corresponds with the adjacent map. The following table in Figure 14 identifies the 13 specific health and wellness services available in North Middlesex.

FIGURE 12: SCHOOLS, RECREATION FACILITIES, AND PUBLIC PARKS



Source: Google maps adapted by MDB Insight, 2015

FIGURE 13: NORTH MIDDLESEX RECREATION CENTRES, PARKS, AND SCHOOLS 2015

North Middlesex Recreation Centres, Parks and Schools			
	Asset	Address	Community
1	Ken Vernon Park	32217 Kerwood Road	Parkhill
2	Parkhill Sports Field	269 McLeod St.	Parkhill
3	Parkhill Arena	256 McLeod Street	Parkhill
4	Ailsa Craig Lion's Park	143 Old Mill Road	Ailsa Craig
5	Coronation Park	176 Broadway Street	Parkhill
6	Ailsa Craig Community Park	155 Annie Ada Shipley Street	Ailsa Craig
7	Lieury Sports Field	3245 McGillivray Drive	Parkhill
8	Nairn Optimist Park	29 East Williams Street	Nairn
9	Parkhill Conservation Area	81 Highway	Parkhill
10	Parkhill West Williams Public School	204 McLeod Street	Parkhill
11	Sacred Heart Catholic School	148 Ann Street	Parkhill
12	North Middlesex District High School	100 Parkhill Main Street	Parkhill
13	McGillivray Central Public School	34714 Creamery Road RR#3	Ailsa Craig
14	Ailsa Craig & District Playschool	155 Annie Ada Shipley Street	Ailsa Craig
15	East Williams Memorial Public School	4441 Queen's Ave. RR#1	Ailsa Craig
16	Parkhill Co-op Playschool	225 McLeod St.	Parkhill



FIGURE 14: NORTH MIDDLESEX HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROVIDERS 2015

Health & Wellness			
Asset	Address	Community	
Dr. Bertha Wolf	232 Parkhill Main St	Parkhill	
Chartwell Parkhill Long Term Care Residence	250 Tain St	Parkhill	
Chateau Village Community Apartments	252 Tain St	Parkhill	
The Currant Organic General Store	216 Parkhill Main St	Parkhill	
Damen Optimal Health	185 King St	Parkhill	
Dove Dental Centres	280 Parkhill Main St	Parkhill	
Genuine Wellness Health Food Boutique	216 Parkhill Main St	Parkhill	
Hear Well Be Well	243 Main St	Parkhill	
Mc Intyre Pharmacy	238 Parkhill Main St.	Parkhill	
Align Counselling & Mediation	154 Main St	Ailsa Craig	
Medisystem Pharmacy Limited	221 Ailsa Craig Main St.	Ailsa Craig	
Om Sweet Om Yoga Centre Inc	141 Ailsa Craig Main St.	Ailsa Craig	
North Middlesex YMCA	256 McLeod Street	Parkhill	



4.5 Development Lands

North Middlesex has a total area of 147,798 acres or 588.15 km². There are 264.73 acres zoned commercial and 358.7 acres zoned industrial. In addition there are 176.81 acres of farms with a commercial or industrial portion and a further 31.42 acres of residential land with a commercial or industrial portion.

The *Middlesex County Employment Land Needs Study (2012)* determined that North Middlesex had a net employment land surplus of 9 hectares of 21 acres for the period of 2011 through 2031.¹⁵

There are 47.81 acres of unoccupied residential land, and a further 26.42 acres of residential land, mainly located in the urban areas of Parkhill, Ailsa Craig, and Nairn. Parkhill has a small supply of residential land available for single lot development, a small parcel that could accommodate a small residential development in the short-term and ample land for long-term residential development. Nairn has very little land with only 0.2 acres available for immediate development. Carlisle has sufficient land for immediate development and sufficient land for short-term development that could double the community's size.

Ailsa Craig, Carlisle, and Nairn are the closest communities to London and therefore the most likely to benefit from London's population growth. Ailsa Craig has limited lands for immediate development but abundant lands identified for short and long-term supply. It would be beneficial to

FIGURE 15: NORTH MIDDLESEX DEVELOPMENT CHARGES TABLE 2015

Location	Unit Type	Development Charges
Ailsa Craig/ Nairn/ Petty Area	Single and semi-detached	\$10,592
	Other Multiples	\$8,255
	Apartments Non-residential	\$4,703 \$1.4600 per square foot of gross floor area
Parkhill Area	Single and semi-detached	\$10,791
	Other Multiples	\$8,413
	Apartments	\$4,793
	Non-residential	\$1.4907 per square foot of gross floor area

Source: www.northmiddlesex.on.ca/sites/north-middlesex.middlesex.ca/files/sitefiles/development_charges_august_6_2015.pdf

¹⁵ County of Middlesex Employment Land Need Study, Millier Dickinson Blais, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2012, p. 87.

monitor and review the available development lands in the municipality over the next few years to determine the focus of growth efforts.

Despite the limited supply of residential homes for sale or rent in the community, landowners have not proceeded with additional residential lot development in the community. Many stakeholders cited high development charges as a barrier to the needed investment.

Residential and non-residential development charges are provided in Figure 15. As is evidenced in the table above, North Middlesex residential development charges are \$10,592 per single and semidetached dwelling. In contrast, the residential development charges for a single or semi-detached residence in Lucan is \$6,400 (see Figure 16 below).¹⁶ This reflects a 40% difference or a current environment where development charges are 40% higher per new single family dwelling in North Middlesex as compared to its neighbouring Township in Middlesex County.

The table below also provides a brief comparative overview of development charges for the surrounding jurisdictions. From a non-residential perspective, North Middlesex is significantly more competitive than Strathroy, Lambton Shores, and Middlesex Centre. However, compared to jurisdictions such as Lucan, Granton, and South Huron, North Middlesex is at a significant disadvantage due to the competitors' lower development charge rates.

FIGURE 16: DEVELOPMENT CHARGES IN COMPARATOR JURISDICTIONS 2015

	North Middlesex Ailsa Craig, Nairn	North Middlesex Parkhill	Lucan- Biddulph (Lucan)	Lucan- Biddulph (Granton)	Strathroy- Caradoc (Strathroy)	Lambton- Shores	Middlesex Centre	South Huron
Single & Semi- detached	\$10,592	\$10,791	\$6,400	\$4,800	\$12,205	\$9,983	\$21,119	\$3,537
Other Multiples	\$8,255	\$8,413	\$5,333	\$4,000	\$9,829	\$8,830	\$14,799	\$2,859

¹⁶ Township of Lucan-Biddulph, Official Website, "Development Charges – Draft Development Charges By-law" (2015); <https://www.lucanbiddulph.on.ca/business/building-planning-development/development-charges>



	North Middlesex Ailsa Craig, Nairn	North Middlesex Parkhill	Lucan- Biddulph (Lucan)	Lucan- Biddulph (Granton)	Strathroy- Caradoc (Strathroy)	Lambton- Shores	Middlesex Centre	South Huron
Apartments	\$4,703	\$4,793	1B \$2,347 2+B \$3,200	1B \$1,760 2+B \$1,760	\$6,365	1B \$5,376 2+ B \$7,081	1B \$8779 2+B \$11,836	1B \$1,329 2+B \$2,606
Non- residential	\$1.460 psf ~\$15.72 m ²	\$1.4907 psf ~\$16.05 m ²	NA	NA	Comm \$57.98/m ² Ind. \$32.71/m ²	Comm \$23.80/m ² Ind. \$23.80/m ²	Ind. \$27.44/n	NA

Source: Various municipal websites, accessed Jan 20, 2016; note: 1 m² = 10.7639 sf.

Although not meant to be a comprehensive competitive assessment, the table above provides food for thought with respect to future directions that North Middlesex should be considering with respect to the cost of local development. The Municipality's residential development charges are higher than similarly sized neighbouring municipalities. The larger communities of Strathroy-Caradoc and Middlesex Centre provide many additional municipal services and amenities, which are reflected in their higher development charges.

Granted, development charges are implemented in order to ensure the offsetting of municipal infrastructure, service, and amenity costs required to support new development, there is an argument that can be made for a careful examination of how the Municipality can more effectively incentivise interested local (and external) developers to encourage increased levels of commercial and residential development.

The following pages of this section provide an illustrative overview of the available residential and non-residential development lands described in detail above.



FIGURE 17: AVAILABLE LAND INVENTORY FOR AILSA CRAIG

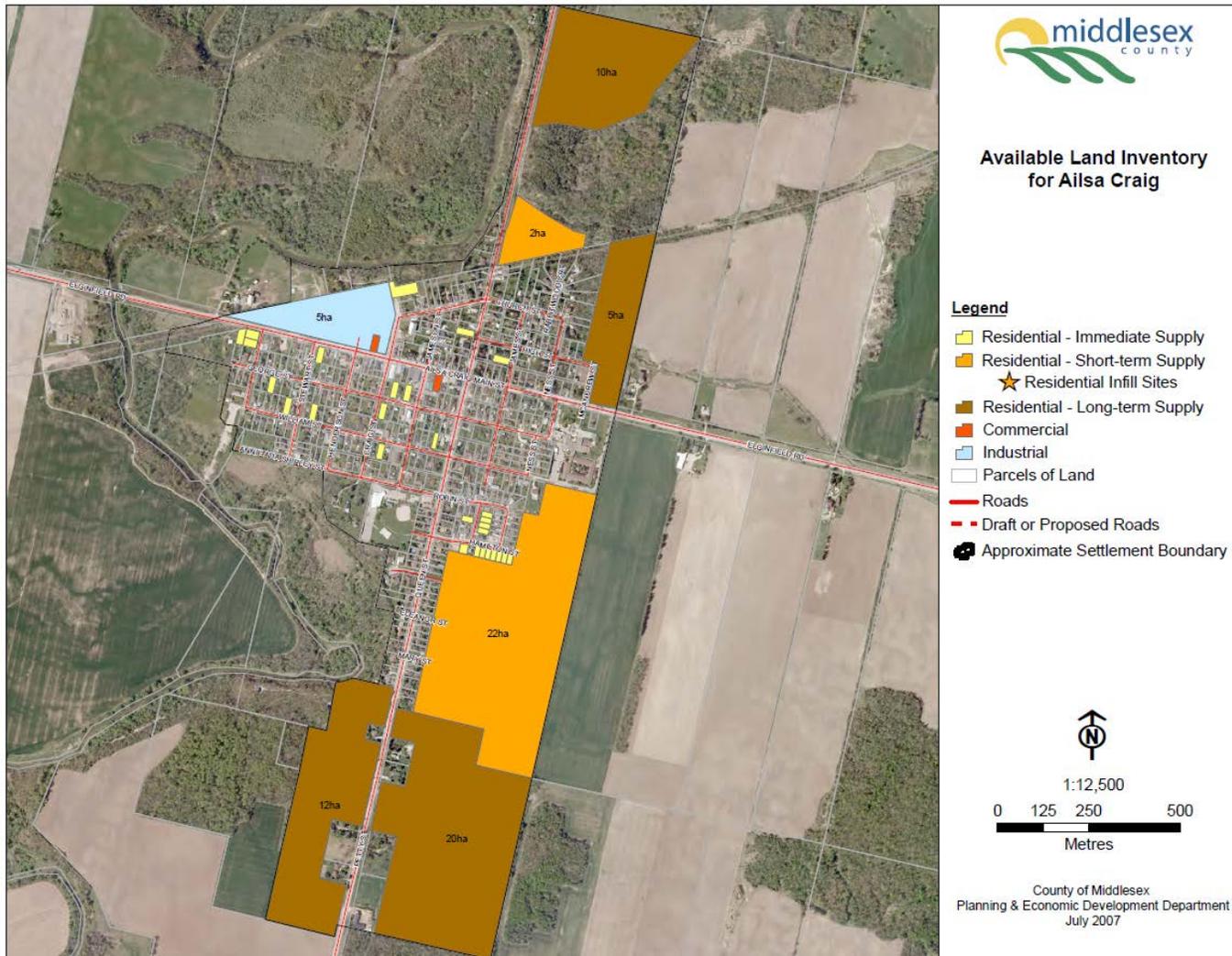


FIGURE 18: AVAILABLE LAND INVENTORY FOR CARLISLE

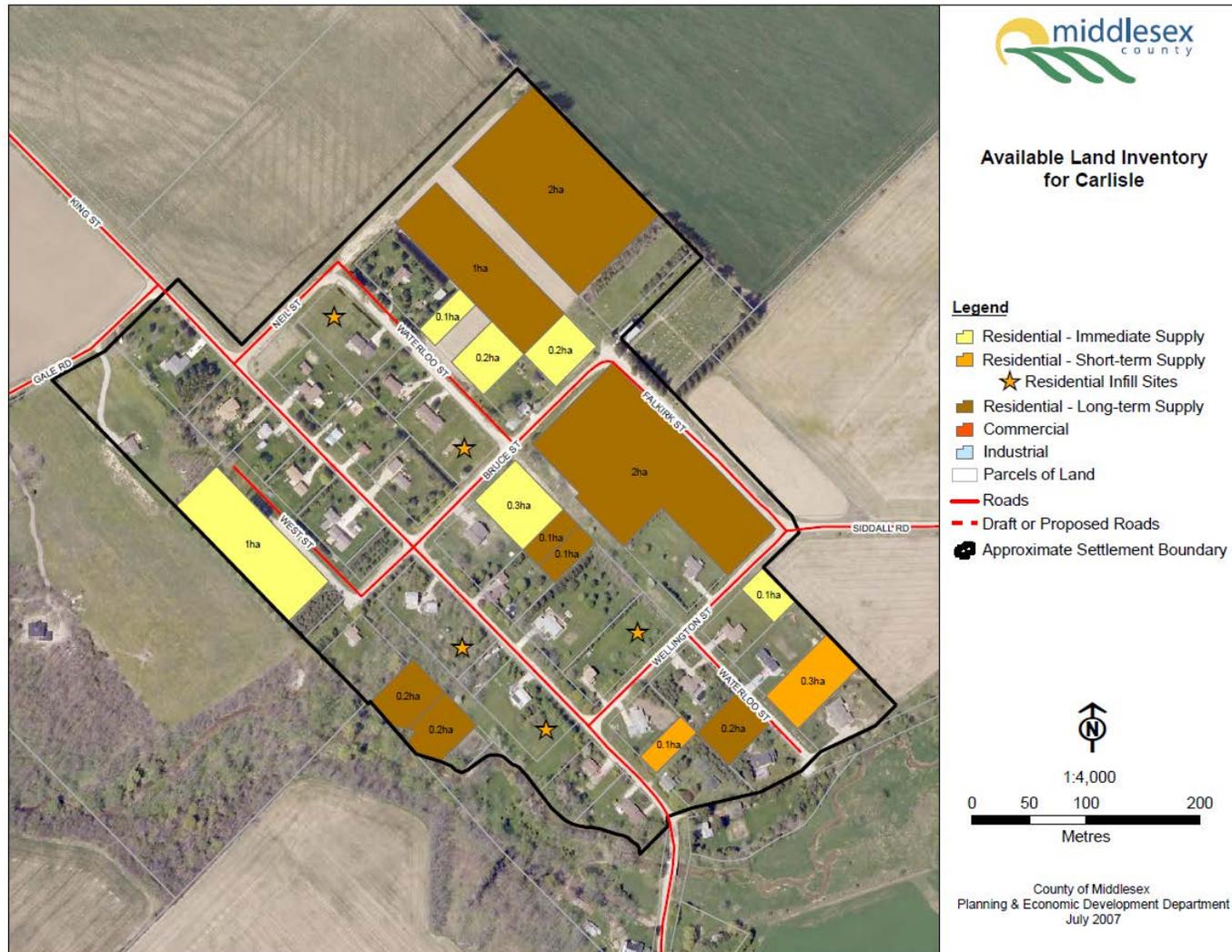


FIGURE 19: AVAILABLE LAND INVENTORY FOR PARKHILL

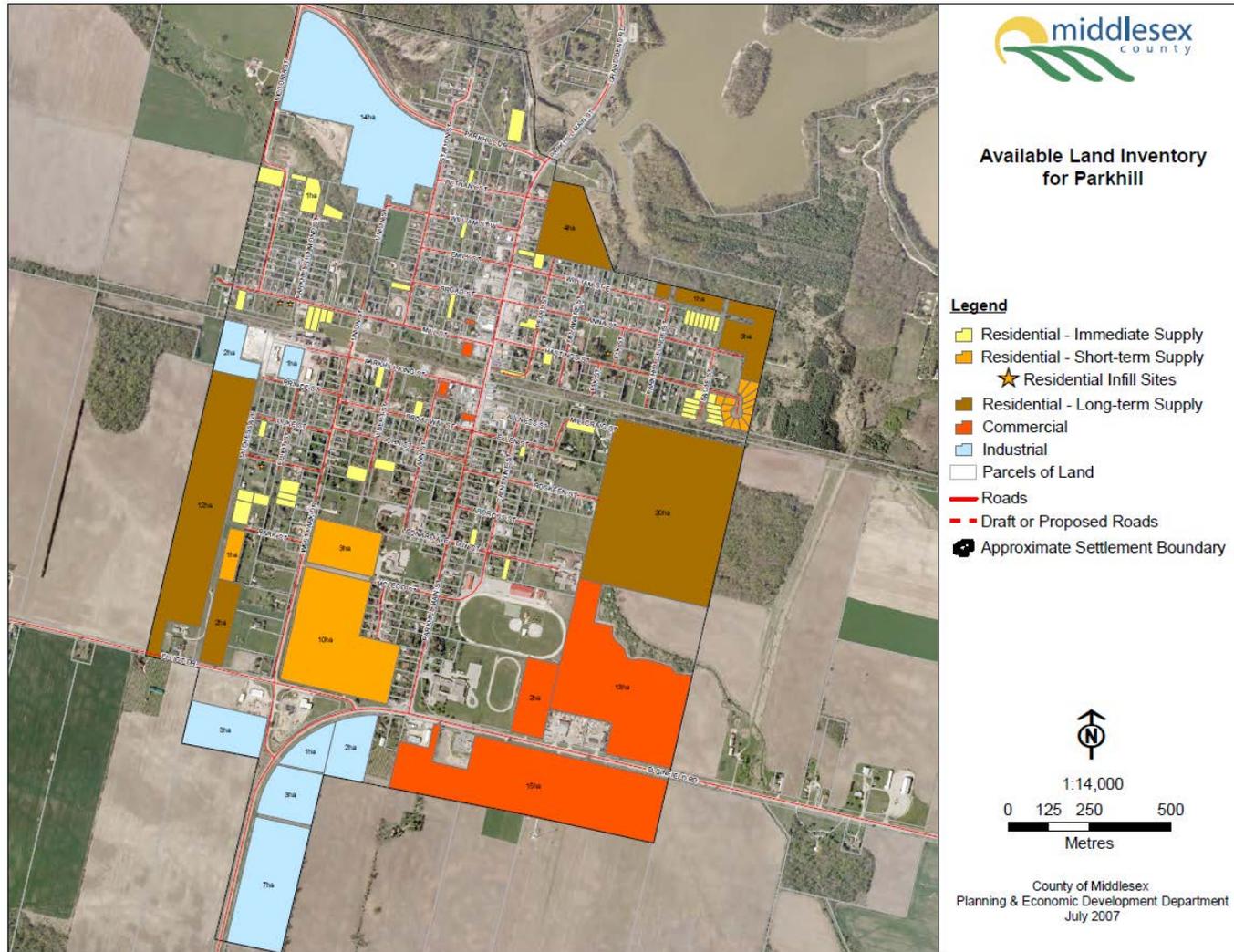
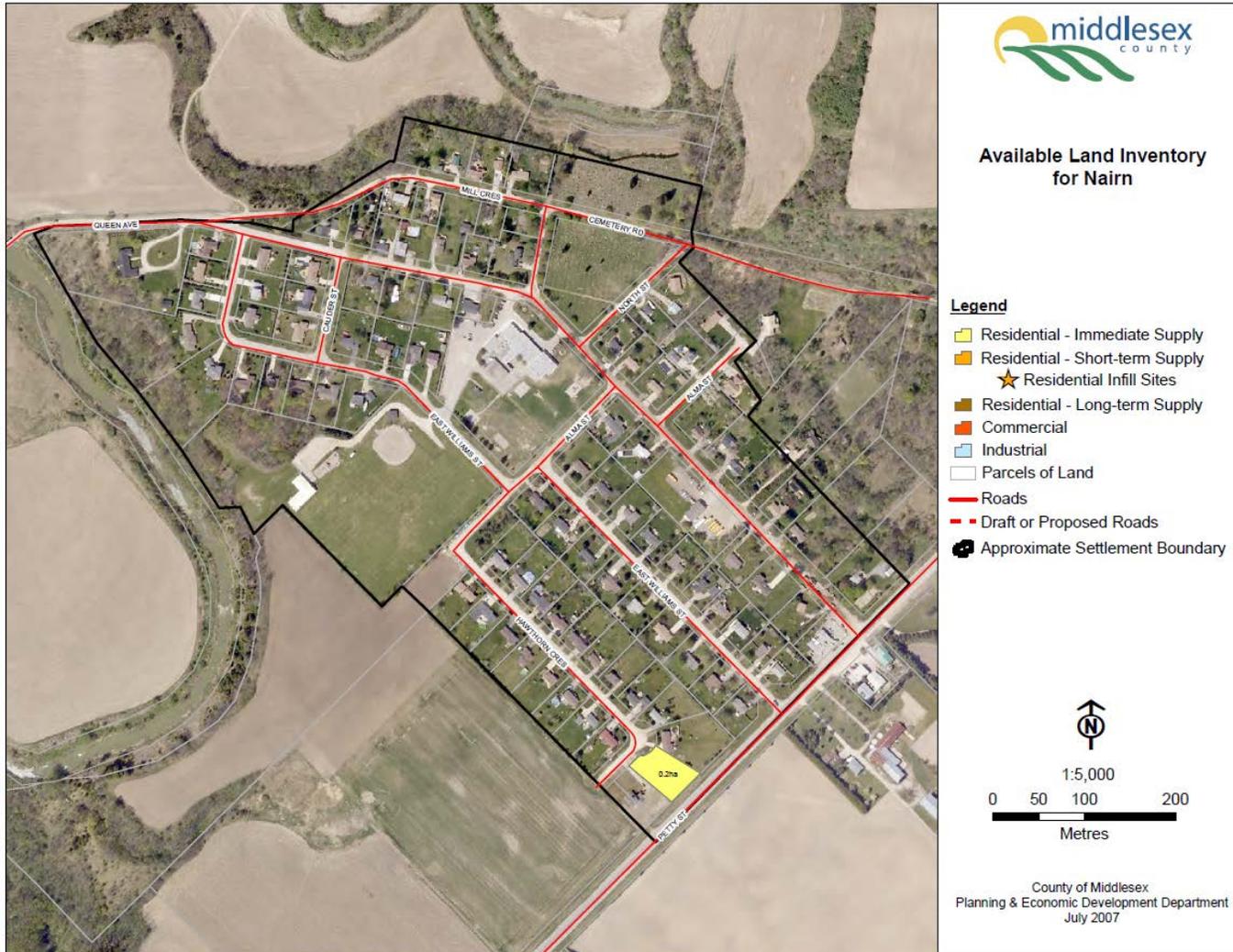


FIGURE 20: AVAILABLE LAND INVENTORY FOR NAIRN





AILS CRAIG COMMUNITY PARK

5) Voice of the Community

Community Consultations
Stakeholder Interviews

5 Voice of the Community

Of critical importance to the development of the North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy was the need to effectively engage the local residents, community stakeholders, and businesses. This was accomplished through the delivery of a series of community consultations, workshops, and stakeholder interviews. In order to gather the broadest input possible and to provide the community with an opportunity to support shaping the vision, goals, strategic directions, and inform on key challenges and opportunities facing North Middlesex, the following engagement activities were conducted:

- Town Hall Meeting (Project Launch), September 26th 2015
- Economic Development Strategic Planning Session (with Economic Development Advisory Committee), October 19th 2015
- Economic Development Strategic Planning Session (with Council), October 24th 2015
- Economic Development 101 Workshop (Administration, Council, Residents), October 27th 2015
- Community Focus Group, November 5th 2015
- Stakeholder Focus Group, November 5th 2015
- 20 One-on-one Community Stakeholder Interviews, September – October 2015

Participants in all of the aforementioned activities included structured and semi-structured conversations and dialogues aimed at obtaining feedback on strengths and weaknesses the community, economy, and local government face, along with questions related to the desired future state of North Middlesex. This included identifying the top strategic priorities for moving the economic development agenda forward, the most promising opportunities to pursue, and visualizing what success will look like.

The following section summarizes the outcomes of the public engagement undertaken for this strategy. A more detailed overview of the various findings and primary research is available in the Appendix: Technical Report, sections 10.6 Community Consultations and 10.7 Stakeholder Interviews.

5.1 Key Findings

- An affordable, safe, rural atmosphere with a small town feel and high quality of life were identified as important community characteristics to all participants. This was also coupled with recognition of a strong agricultural base, civic-minded culture, and a beautiful environment and natural resources that are enjoyed by locals. A relaxed environment where people can raise families while still being within a reasonable distance from major urban centres if needed, was highly valued

- It was noted that although progress is being made with the two Downtown areas, the assets are not being leveraged or maximized as best as they could be. There was a sentiment that more should be done to capture “through-traffic” in the urban areas, increased business and entrepreneurship supports (for small business and agriculture), a need to work more closely and collaboratively with the local business community, and better utilization of wind turbine royalties
- The top priorities informing strategic directions that emerged through the consultations were:
 - Attracting youth and families, and increasing population growth
 - Improving development processes and encouraging more residential and commercial development
 - Ensuring affordable housing and mixed accommodations for all ages
 - Improving infrastructure for residents and businesses (especially high speed internet access)
 - Ensuring the Municipality is “Investment Ready” and able to act on opportunities
 - Supporting small business, entrepreneurship, and industry growth and retention (including agriculture)
 - Developing effective marketing and promotion of North Middlesex investment and tourism opportunities
 - Improving the overall attractiveness of the community (Downtown revitalization, amenities, entertainment, etc.)
- When asked about what some key success indicators would be five years from now, so that the community knows if their economic development strategy is working, the prominent metrics identified were:
 - New residential development growth and population increase
 - Diversification of the economy and agricultural sector underway
 - Revitalized Downtowns and increased local shopping
 - Investment ready municipality and serviced lands
 - Improved access to high speed internet
 - Maintained quality of life and affordable community
- An assessment of Development Charges and the cost of doing business compared to other municipalities and developing a an understanding of the Municipality’s competitiveness with respect to its neighbours and competitors is needed

“We need housing that attracts families....”

North Middlesex Resident



- North Middlesex companies and business community can benefit greatly from increased knowledge of the local economy, networking and business connectivity opportunities, and a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program
- The greatest areas of potential opportunity for North Middlesex to stimulate economic growth over the next five years were identified as:
 - Expanding agricultural exports, including diversification into value-added activities (including new crops and food products), creating an agri-innovation hub, exploring agri-tourism, and leveraging existing strengths
 - Increasing the community's appeal for commercial growth by attracting new residential development and increasing the population (especially with new families, young professionals, and new comers from urban centres)
 - Local small business development, supports, promotion, and celebration: establish a BR&E program that is connected to Downtown revitalization, assisting with funding and financing programs, business networking and recognition initiatives, promoting home-based businesses, and collaborative marketing opportunities
 - Capturing business and investment opportunities associated with meeting aging population needs and senior's demands while supporting aging in place and increased leisure/recreation activities geared towards active living
 - Increase Downtown revitalization efforts in collaboration with County, OMAFRA, and local industry
 - Explore tourism opportunities connected to heritage, agriculture, Downtowns, and leveraging existing cultural strengths and festivals
 - Participating in and collaborating with regional programs (e.g., Middlesex County, Western Wardens Caucus, Regional Tourism Organization (RTO), The Business Help Centre (CFDC), etc.) that can support local initiatives
 - Improve marketing and communications to the local community and businesses, as well as externally targeting key audiences identified as potential attraction prospects (people, business, entrepreneurs, investors)
 - Strategically leverage the strong sense of civic pride, entrepreneurial spirit, and local volunteerism to support economic development initiatives through improved and more formalized community engagement

“Communication is vital. Readily available data and updates about who is living in North Middlesex, the businesses that are growing and expanding, the recreational, community and commercial amenities would be very helpful.”

***North Middlesex
Business Leader***



- Expanding high speed internet access and availability in order to encourage more self-employment, working remotely, technology and knowledge-driven business, home-based occupations, and increased population
- Challenges and barriers that limit economic development and sustainability for North Middlesex included:
 - Municipal practices and development processes (ensuring competitiveness with neighbouring communities, zoning and severance barriers, length and complexity of process, incentivizing growth and attraction, improved customer service and communications)
 - Lack of shovel ready lands, servicing limitations for residential and commercial development, and development costs are prohibitive
 - Limited municipal revenue generation capacity and shrinking tax-base
 - Access and isolation: distanced from the rest of the County and from major highways and transportation corridors; issues related to seasonal access in winter and higher transportation costs
 - Cost of living concerns: a need to ensure new residential development is affordable for existing and new residents; balancing the recognition that commuting costs fluctuate and can increase
 - Limited marketing and promotion of North Middlesex (including more effectively utilizing the municipal website and implementing a strategic and targeted approach that leverages partners and regional collaborations)
 - Apprehension to change and risk taking combined with a need for greater coordination among government. Community associations and business community have a perception that there is a lack of vision for growth and development among elected leaders in the municipality
 - More effort is needed in Downtown revitalization; relative unattractiveness, with vacant store-fronts and buildings
- Stakeholders provided key insights into what make memorable communities from their perspective when they travel or experience other areas. Among the most frequently cited were the first impressions given by well-maintained public infrastructure, beautiful and vibrant properties, homes, and well supported Downtown areas that include historic streetscaping, heritage buildings and successful commercial areas that are interconnected with arts and culture
- When asked what Municipal Council need to do first in order to positively influence the new Economic Development Strategy's success the following recommendations came forward:

“Attractive residential streetscapes and unique commercial shops and restaurants create a memorable experience.”

Business Owner, Parkhill

- Set and follow through on the vision
 - Increase collaboration efforts
 - Support the strategic plan implementation through incentives, funding and having qualified individuals responsible for coordination
 - Support the active BIA
 - Facilitate the creation of a North Middlesex networking group or association (e.g. Mayor's breakfast)
 - Build the vibrancy of the downtown to be the face of the community
 - Communicate that North Middlesex is the place to raise a family and start a business
 - Measure success through indicators
 - Review any by-laws pertaining to development and growth
- A strong sentiment emerged through the consultation process that emphasized the need for strategically and well-planned residential growth that included a mix of housing options – both in form and price range (e.g., rental apartments, condos, semi-detached and starter homes, as well as mid-range and luxury homes). Further, there is a distinct need for affordable, barrier free housing to accommodate an aging population and senior citizens, and the importance of increasing the density of residential development in order to generate increased school enrollment rates. It was also identified that residential development should be directed to the urbanized areas
 - When asked how this could potentially impact future growth in North Middlesex, the following input was provided:
 - Will appeal to young families for our schools, seniors for retirement, and businesses looking to relocate
 - Will create more demand for skilled health care workers
 - Will create recreation services jobs
 - Seniors will spend their money locally
 - Will intensify development in urban areas
 - Should support growth projections
 - Should dovetail with jobs



6) Community Survey

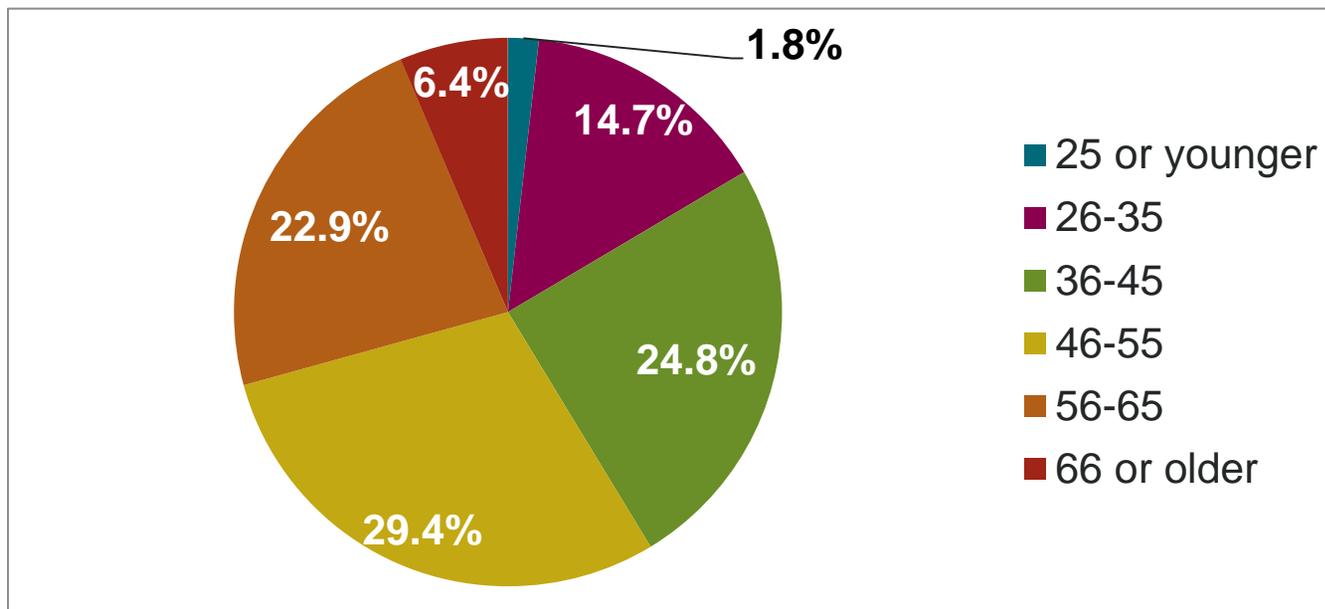
6 Community Survey

An online survey was conducted targeting local businesses and the community at large regarding economic development in North Middlesex and what it means to them. In total, 140 people participated in the survey which included:

- 24 Business owners or operators
- 95 Residents
- 6 Service club or association members
- 15 Other (many of these respondents indicated a combination of the options provided above)

The age distribution of participants is summarized in [Figure 21](#), where participation was strongest between those aged 36 to 65 years old.

FIGURE 21: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=109



6.1 Tapping the Business Community

In total, 24 business owners or operators participated in the survey and their input provides insight into the needs and perspectives of businesses in North Middlesex.

A series of questions were asked specifically to these participants in order to better understand the local business climate. While the number of businesses who participated is not large, and one should be careful regarding generalizations, the findings offer insights and understandings of some of the potential needs and preferences of businesses in North Middlesex.

The industry sectors represented by the different business owners are summarized in [Figure 22](#). As shown, agriculture and retail business owners represented the largest categories of survey participants (62%). Other industries represented by business participants included business services, healthcare, tourism and hospitality, finance and insurance, and professional and scientific services.

Business participants were then asked how many years they have operated in North Middlesex¹⁷. An overwhelming majority of participants (18 people) indicated that they have been operating in North Middlesex for over 10 years. The breakdown is as follows:

- Less than 2 years (2 participants)
- 2-5 years (2 participants)
- Greater than 10 years (18 participants)

¹⁷ N=22

FIGURE 22: SECTORS REPRESENTED BY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Sector	Distribution	Participants
Agriculture	33.3%	7
Retail	28.6%	6
Business services	9.5%	2
Healthcare	9.5%	2
Tourism/hospitality	9.5%	2
Finance and insurance	4.8%	1

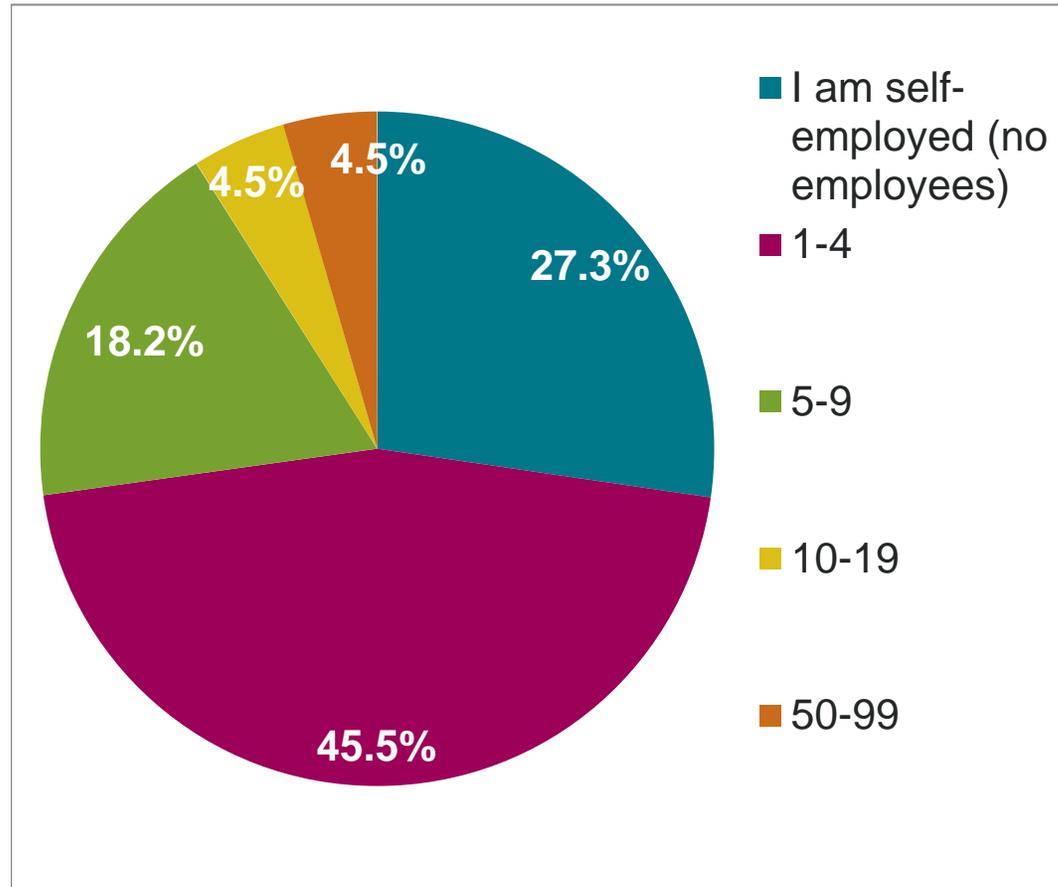
Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=21

When owner/operators were asked whether or not they live in one of the communities in North Middlesex¹⁸, 19 indicated that they live in North Middlesex, while four indicated that they live outside of the municipality.

Business owners were also asked whether or not they were considering expanding their business in the next two years. Of those that responded¹⁹, 11 business owners indicated that they were considering expanding in the next two years. Seven of the participants indicated that they were not sure, and five indicated that they were not planning on expanding in the next two years.

To get a sense of the relative size of the businesses of those participating in the survey, business respondents were asked how many employees were involved in their operations in North Middlesex. Figure 23 illustrates that almost all of the businesses owners (91%) that participated indicated that they currently have less than 10 employees or are self-employed. Although the sample size is small, it provides a snapshot into the importance of micro and self-employed firms in North Middlesex.

FIGURE 23: NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN SURVEY PARTICIPANT BUSINESSES



Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=22

¹⁸ N=23

¹⁹ N=23



As a final question posed directly to business owner/operators, participants were asked to rate the level of importance for various factors likely to have an effect on business growth. Figure 24 provides an overview of the ranked score for the various factors of growth, where the higher the value, the greater the importance attributed to growth.

The results indicate that the largest factor affecting business growth in North Middlesex is the telecommunication and internet infrastructure within the community, followed by access to services (electrical, gas, water and wastewater). These highlight the importance of reliable and quality infrastructure in the growth of businesses in North Middlesex.

An efficient development environment and support for entrepreneurs were also identified as areas of importance. This may speak to the perceived issues associated with development within the municipality, as well as support mechanisms for business start-ups in the community. Of note is that this survey does not provide insight as to whether inefficiencies are prevalent at the Municipality or whether or not support for entrepreneurs is unavailable, inadequate or simply held in high importance. Further, it does not provide any insight into the respondent's level of awareness that lengthy or complex processes may be a consequence of provincially mandated policies, procedures, regulations etc.

The results also show that in regard to the workforce, skilled labour is required more than un-skilled or semi-skilled labour. As an added benefit, when there is a demand for greater skilled labour, larger incomes usually follow resulting in more discretionary spending in the local economy.

FIGURE 24: FACTORS AFFECTING BUSINESS GROWTH IN NORTH MIDDLESEX

Factors of Growth	Importance (Weighted Avg.)
Availability And Quality Of High-Speed Internet and Telecom	9.29
Access To Services: electrical, gas, water and wastewater	8.70
Efficient Development Environment (For Expansion Approvals, New Development, Etc.)	8.19
Support for Entrepreneurs	8.15
Availability of Housing	7.95
Access To Business Services	7.82
Access To Financing	7.39
Proximity To Supply Chains and Markets	7.24
Availability Of A Skilled Workforce	7.23
Access to Transportation Infrastructure	7.04
Access To Quality Post-Secondary Education, Skills Development And Training	6.77
Availability Of A Semi-Skilled Workforce	6.50

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=23



In conclusion, the following observations can be made about the business that participated in the survey:

- Most business are micro firms or self-employed, with 91% employing fewer than 10 employees
- While almost half (48%) of businesses expect to expand within the next two years, seven indicated they were unsure. This can provide the opportunity to probe more directly for the business retention and expansion needs of local business
- The top indicated needs for business growth are:
 - Availability and Quality of High-Speed Internet and Telecom
 - Access To Services: electrical, gas, water and wastewater
 - Efficient Development Environment (For Expansion Approvals, New Development, Etc.)
 - Support for Entrepreneurs
- Workforce needs are most strongly demanded among skilled labour over un-skilled or semi-skilled labour
- Some factors associated with business growth may not be well represented in the survey results, as a result of the low business response rate. This would indicate a need for a more thorough and direct engagement targeted exclusively at business owners, such as through business visitations or surveys conducted through a local BIA, Chamber of Commerce, or via business associations

All participants of the survey were asked to list key words that they believed reflected their feelings or perceptions of North Middlesex²⁰. The results were captured and stored in order to identify the frequency or occurrence of various words or phrases, as illustrated in [Figure 25](#) (above).

The language employed by participants indicates both positive and negative sentiments about the community. The top words or phrases used by participants are:

- Rural (20)
- Friendly (12)
- Agriculture/Agricultural (9)
- Community (9)
- Small (8)
- Quiet (6)
- Clean (4)
- Family (4)
- Safe (4)
- Stagnant (4)

Of note is the high number of words pertaining to a non-urban lifestyle, such as rural, friendly, agriculture/agricultural, small, community, and quiet. These reflect the atmosphere of a rural, small town environment and the appeal of a quiet and friendly community. Participants also indicated that North Middlesex is a safe and clean environment that one can raise a family in.

Words such as 'stagnant' imply that there has been a lack of growth within the community. To some extent the term may stand in contrast to the other valued non-urban lifestyle aspects identified above because with the addition of more development or growth within a municipality, participants may see this as threatening the non-urban lifestyle aspects currently valued.

²⁰ N=79

6.3 Defining Economic Development

The term economic development may represent different ideas or things to different people. As a result, the survey sought to understand all of the participants' understandings of the components of economic development. The results of the open-ended questions are broken down by emergent themes from the responses provided by participants as shown in [Figure 26](#) (below).

The top themes associated with definitions for economic development are summarized as:

- Attraction of New Businesses
- A Growing, Thriving and Prosperous Municipality
- A Good Business Climate and Better Support
- Job Growth and New Local Employment
- Population and Tax Base Growth
- Sustainable Development
- Quality of Life

Attraction of new business emerged most often because participants tended to associate it with growth and development. Several responses specifically indicated the need for new retail businesses in the community to increase local shopping and to reduce the outflow of residents shopping in nearby urban centres.

FIGURE 26: WHAT DOES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEAN TO YOU?

Economic Development	Freq.	Economic Development (cont'd)	Freq.
Attraction of New Businesses	26	Residential Development and Quality Housing	4
A Growing, Thriving and Prosperous Municipality	25	Revitalize/Regenerative the downtown	4
A Good Business Climate and Better Support	15	Good Infrastructure	3
Job Growth and New Local Employment	13	Effective Marketing	3
Population and Tax Base Growth	13	More Revenue/Higher Taxes	2
Sustainable Development	11	Waste of Money	2
Quality of Life	10	Youth Attraction	1
Forward Thinking/ New ideas	8		

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=81



The responses associated with a growing, thriving, and prosperous municipality speak to a larger theme of wanting to see business growth and development that creates a thriving and prosperous community for all residents. It should be noted however that participants also indicated they see economic development as sustainable development. This highlights the residents' desire to grow and thrive, but to do so in what is perceived as a smart and sustainable way.

Another area of interest in the results relates to business climate and business support. These tie closely to the notion that in order to develop economically, a municipality must have a favourable business climate and provide support to both large and small scale developments within the community. Participants highlighted areas such as development charges, taxes, development process, and attitudes towards development which would need to be examined in order to ensure a good business investment climate and that business supports exist.

6.4 Strengths for Building a Stronger Economy in North Middlesex

The survey asked participants to identify strengths and challenges associated with building a strong economy in North Middlesex. In total, 63 people offered lists of strengths, while 68 participants provided lists of challenges. Both questions had notably lower participation rates from those who began the survey.

North Middlesex has several assets that are sources of pride or opportunity in regard to building a strong economy. These strengths are summarized in [Figure 27](#).

Several broad themes emerged from the results that allow for further discussion. They are as follows:

- **Quality of life attributes** – A key ingredient for business attraction, next to an available workforce, is the availability of a good quality of life. Strengths related to quality of life are associated with the following notions:
 - Friendly, loyal and committed people
 - A large sense of community and volunteerism
 - A rural and beautiful environment
 - Small town appeal
 - Safe
 - History/Historic town

The abundance of references to the quality of life in North Middlesex implies that the community provides an environment conducive to raising families while having the support of the community at large.

FIGURE 27: STRENGTHS FOR BUILDING A STRONG ECONOMY IN NORTH MIDDLESEX

Strengths	Freq.	Strengths (cont'd)	Freq.
Location	19	Support of Council	2
People	16	High Traffic	2
Agricultural Base	16	Efficient Town Hall	1
Sense of Community	15	Fiscal Responsibility	1
Rural and Beautiful Environment	10	Quality Of Life	1
Available Land and Buildings	8	Innovation	1
Good Schools	7	Forward Thinking/Vision	1
Tourism	6	None	1
Affordable Living	7	Progressive CAO	1
Educated Workers	4	Diversity	1
Good Services Providers	4	Safe	1
Great Small Businesses	5	High Speed Internet	1
Public Infrastructure	3	Recreation Resources	1
Small Town Appeal	3	History	1

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=63



- **Measureable assets** – Several themes fit under the broader heading of measureable assets. These are items that can be tracked and indexed in order to evaluate competitiveness with other communities. Such assets include:
 - Location to major highways and urban centres
 - Large agricultural base and land
 - Land and building availability
 - Good schools
 - Cost of living/Affordable housing
 - Educated workers
 - Public infrastructure

If shown to be more competitive, the assets above can be leveraged in the Municipality's marketing and investment attraction initiatives.

6.5 Challenges/Barriers to Building a Stronger Economy in North Middlesex

Participants indicated that North Middlesex has several challenges in regards to building a stronger local economy. The results are summarized in [Figure 28](#) below.

As with the discussion of strengths, some larger themes also emerged that are associated with the various identified challenges. These are identified below.

- **Governance** – This theme highlights challenges associated with the Municipality's corporate leadership regarding economic development, specifically an organizational, operational, and relationship perspective. Examples of perspectives related to weaknesses provided by respondents include:
 - Lack of visionary leadership
 - Red tape and development costs/process
 - Support for small business initiatives
 - Community identification/issues between former townships
 - Need for better planning

The top challenge identified by participants was the lack of visionary leadership existing within the community; most notably in regard to Municipal Council. This theme carries implications for future business growth, especially locally, as businesses and residents may be reluctant to move ahead or take on risk if there is a public perception that a lack of forward thinking exists within the Municipality.

FIGURE 28: CHALLENGES TO BUILDING A STRONG ECONOMY IN NORTH MIDDLESEX

Challenges/Barriers	Freq.	Challenges/Barriers (cont'd)	Freq.
Lack of Visionary Leadership	14	Mosquitos	3
Red Tape and Development Costs/Process	14	Tenancy Issues	2
Declining Population and Attracting New Residents	10	Hydro/Energy Costs	2
Support for Small Business Initiatives	8	A Commuter Town	2
Poor/Aging Infrastructure	8	Youth Retention	2
Lack of New Businesses and Business Growth	7	Lack of Innovation	2
Taxes are Too High	6	Lack of Residential Development and Affordable Housing	2
Potential Closure of the High School	6	Crime	2
Rural Location and Proximity to London	6	Supporting both Agriculture and Urban Areas	2
Poor Internet Service	5	Accessibility and Hours of Businesses	2
Quality of Education Offered	5	Better Health and Medical Services	1
Lack of Employment Opportunities	4	Potential Carbon Tax	1
Lack of large industry	4	Access to Employment Resources	1
Lack of festivals and events	4	Lack of Collaboration between Community Organizations	1
Community Identification/Issues between Former Townships	4	Transportation Issues	1
Need Better planning	4	Farm Consolidation	1
Maintaining Small, Rural Town Feel	3	Spending Too Much	1

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=68



Nevertheless, the findings illustrate that, at face value, there is a need for better relationship management with residents and businesses on a variety of fronts if the Municipality wishes to increase public confidence, or address potential issues associated with apathy.

- **Measurable assets** – Although North Middlesex has some measurable assets as strengths, there are also areas that have been identified as challenges. These identified notions have the potential to affect North Middlesex’s competitiveness in a negative manner and include:
 - Lack of new business and business growth
 - Taxes are too high
 - Lack of employment opportunities
 - Lack of large industry
 - Lack of residential development/affordable housing

These notions can be viewed as weakness in North Middlesex’s competitive advantage as they reflect gaps in, or challenges to, competing with other municipalities. However, because these weaknesses are measurable, it is possible to address these factors and create solutions to limit the impact the weaknesses have on the municipality. Note that some participants in the survey listed affordable housing/living as both a strength and challenge to building a stronger economy in North Middlesex. This result suggests that there is some confusion over the competitiveness of affordable living/housing in North Middlesex.

- **Uncompetitive space** – Some of the challenges indicated by participants relate to North Middlesex’s ability to leverage itself competitively. These include:
 - Declining population/Attracting new residents
 - Potential of high school closure
 - Rural location and proximity to London
 - Commuter town
 - Youth retention
 - Transportation issues

These perspectives indicate that North Middlesex in some ways is becoming or has become a bedroom community to nearby large urban centres such as London. This becomes even more difficult as participants indicated that the population continues to decline. This results in a shrinking the tax base and effectively increases the tax burden on those residents still living in North Middlesex.

This notion illustrates a need for North Middlesex to seek and take ownership of some core competencies that distinguish it from others and make it a destination for something other than residential use. By doing so, North Middlesex can actually begin to attract more residents including families and youth to live in the municipality by offering them more than just a community to sleep in.

6.6 Satisfaction with Municipal Programs and Services

All survey participants were also asked to evaluate their satisfaction with a series of programs and services on a scale of 1 to 5. The categories evaluated relate to multiple dimensions of municipal operations in addition to economic development.

The results are summarized in Figure 29, where responses are ranked from most satisfied to least satisfied.

An interesting observation was that all aspects relating to the economy were rated the poorest compared to other categories:

- Number of Employment opportunities available
- Quality of employment opportunities available
- Planning and development
- Small business supports
- Availability of retail shopping

The fact that these economic categories were ranked below a score of 3, suggests that collectively economic development in North Middlesex is understood to be weak or insufficient compared to other municipal services or programs.

FIGURE 29: LEVEL OF STATISFACTION WITH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN NORTH MIDDLESEX

Program/Service	Level of Satisfaction
Public Libraries	4.44
Parks and the Environment	3.92
Sports & Recreational Activities	3.81
Availability and Quality Of Schools	3.39
Access to Healthcare	3.07
Services for Seniors	2.88
Internet Access	2.88
Availability of Retail Shopping	2.72
Small Business Supports	2.59
Collaboration between Municipal Governments & Other Levels Of Government	2.57
Planning & Development	2.23
Quality of Employment Opportunities Available	2.04
Number of employment opportunities available	1.93

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=76



As Figure 30 illustrates further, agreement was the strongest among participants over the statement, “North Middlesex needs to actively pursue more commercial (retail) / industrial growth through business retention and attraction.” As well, participants mostly disagreed with the statement that, “North Middlesex is a good location for a business to locate.” This further highlights the identified gap in economic development programs and/or services in North Middlesex.

FIGURE 30: LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON STATEMENTS ABOUT NORTH MIDDLESEX

Statement	Level of Agreement
North Middlesex needs to actively pursue more commercial (retail) / industrial growth through business retention and attraction.	4.16
North Middlesex needs to actively pursue a, “mix of housing” options.	3.99
North Middlesex is a welcoming community for all ages.	3.45
North Middlesex should retain its rural 'pace of life' atmosphere.	3.43
North Middlesex is a good location for a business to locate.	3.19

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=75



6.7 Identifying Priorities for Future Growth in North Middlesex

Survey participants were asked to rank a series of strategic priorities by order of preference (with a score of 1 being of highest importance, and 14 being of lowest importance) for the future growth and prosperity of North Middlesex. Figure 31 provides a comparison of the highest and lowest ranking categories according to level of importance for survey respondents. It should be understood that the Level of Preference is a weighted average that is calculated based on the frequency with which a response is given on the scale of one to 10. A score of 5.10 indicates high responses in 1s, 2s, 3s, and so on; and a score of 9.67 indicates high levels of 13s, 14s etc.

The responses from participants reveal that there is a more preference for economic development initiatives over other components of municipal life.

Highest ranking priority categories:

- Increase employment opportunities
- Supporting small business and entrepreneurs
- Rural high speed internet
- Attraction and development of new innovative industries

Lowest ranking priority categories:

- Promotion arts and culture
- Heritage conservation
- Industrial land development
- Conservation of the environment

Of note between the two lists is the distinction between a high priority for attraction and development of new innovative industries and a low priority for industrial land development. This may suggest that participants are welcoming to new industries in the community, so long as they do not disrupt the rural and small town feel of North Middlesex. This observation may provide greater insight into what participants mean when referring to sustainable development in North Middlesex.

FIGURE 31: RANKING OF IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE GROWTH IN NORTH MIDDLESEX

Priority	Level of Preference
Increased Employment Opportunities	5.10
Supporting Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs	5.16
Rural High Speed Internet	5.20
Attraction and Development of New Innovative Industries	5.52
Youth Retention	6.84
Promotion and Marketing	7.00
Tourist Events & Recreational Amenities	7.41
Seniors Facilities and Services	7.61
Expansion of Current Industries	7.88
Commercial Land Development	7.93
Conservation of the Environment	8.10
Industrial Land Development	8.81
Heritage Conservation	9.60
Promoting Local Arts And Crafts	9.67

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=75



6.8 Moving Forward on Priorities

The final question of the survey asked participants the following question: “What do you think could be done, or needs to happen in the next three years to positively influence North Middlesex’s continued economic competitiveness and community success?”

Participants provided feedback in their own words, summarized in [Figure 32](#).

FIGURE 32: IDENTIFIED ACTIONS NEEDED TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS AND COMMUNITY SUCCESS IN NORTH MIDDLESEX

Area of Action	Freq.	Area of Action (cont'd)	Freq.
Promote and Support Local Business (e.g. incentives, exporting support, shop local)	12	By-law Enforcement	2
High Speed Internet	11	Health Care Access/Health Hub	2
Invest in the Community (festivals, events, art gallery, and use of money from NextEra)	8	Continued Support of Volunteers	2
Attract New Businesses and Industry	8	Infrastructure Investments	2
Residential Development and Affordable Housing	8	Not sure	2
Promotion and Marketing of the Community	5	Maintain and Provide New Services	2
Attract and Retain Residents and Families	5	Land Incentives and Servicing	2
Downtown Redevelopment/Beautification	4	Mosquitos	1
Expanding Local Employment Opportunities	4	Hydro and Energy costs	1
Retention of the High School	4	Transportation	1
Increased Community Collaboration	4	Access to Governmental Funding	1
An Economic Development Plan	4	Extend Local Business hours	1
A Proactive and Visionary council	4	Less Low Income Rentals	1
Crime Prevention	3		

Source: MDB Insight, 2015. N=62

Analysis of the results indicates that with the exception of “invest in the community” and “attract and retain residents and families”, the top nine actions all fit within the notion of an economic development lens, as shown below:

- Promote and support local business (12)
- High speed internet (11)
- Invest in the community (8)
- Attract new businesses and industry (8)
- Residential development and affordable housing (8)
- Promotion and marketing of the community (5)
- Attract and retain residents and families (4)
- Downtown redevelopment/beautification (4)
- Expanding local employment opportunities (4)

As stated previously, these results indicate that participants see room for improvement with the current level of economic development effort on the part of the Municipality of North Middlesex. Although participants did indicate that there are strengths within the community to attract new residents and businesses, these are mainly in regard to quality of life attributes. This suggests that participants are aware that North Middlesex has what it takes to be a thriving community in terms of attracting residents and businesses. A concentrated effort and plan to attract new residential and business development is needed in order to make that happen.



A photograph of a modern building with a mix of stone and glass facades. The building has large windows and a prominent stone section. The sky is blue with some clouds. A white semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

7) Competitiveness Assessment

SWOT Analysis

Competitive Advantages and Disadvantages

7 Competitiveness Assessment

7.1 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

This component of the report aggregates all of the common themes, understandings, and findings from the research and the comprehensive engagement conducted as part of the strategic planning process. This is presented in the form of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis for the Municipality of North Middlesex. A SWOT Analysis is a useful strategic planning tool that is used to uncover both internal and external factors that affect the community and informs how to best conduct its economic development activities.

In general, strengths are recognized as resources and assets that can be leveraged by the municipality in order to stimulate and support local growth and economic prosperity. Weaknesses are specific issues internal to the community that may prevent the community's success, or interfere with the achievement of specific objectives, actions, or goals. These factors may need to be improved or eliminated in order for the Municipality of North Middlesex to capitalize on opportunities and effect positive change.

Opportunities are unique or specific elements that can be leverage to overcome the challenges and weaknesses that the community faces. Threats are generally external factors that prevent a community's success and frustrate the successful implementation of the economic development strategy.

The purpose of this section is to utilize the SWOT analysis to inform the strategic priorities and action plan for the Municipality of North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy.

7.1.1 Strengths

Agriculture Sector

North Middlesex has a strong agriculture sector representing 14% of all employment in the community. While total employment has declined in agriculture, the incomes enjoyed in this sector remain strong and result in household incomes in the municipality

“Farming and agricultural land is a huge asset. We need to ensure we protect it.”

**North
Middlesex
Business
Operator**

that are higher than the provincial average. These farmers are by necessity tied to the community and represent a valuable resource in supporting and building the local economy. The supporting goods and services for the agricultural sector go far beyond processing and farm equipment. Services such as insurance, financial planning and accounting also benefit from the support of the agriculture sector. Employers report that the agricultural culture instils a strong work ethic in the local workforce.

Entrepreneurial Culture

It is recognized that the rural, agricultural community is strongly influenced by a high degree of entrepreneurship in the community. North Middlesex has a very high share of sole proprietors, home based and micro businesses. These businesses are more resilient and flexible in times of economic downturn and remain loyal to their local community.

Quality of Life/ Quality of Place

North Middlesex offers a quality of life and quality of place that is valued by its residents. The overwhelming civic pride of the North Middlesex residents emerged strongly in the community survey, focus group meetings, and individual interviews. Residents and business owners describe North Middlesex as a good place to raise a family with affordable housing and a friendly small town feel. They spoke of their personal connections with the people, organizations, and businesses in the community. They also referenced the beautiful natural environment and recreation options in the rural setting.

Community Amenities

North Middlesex has invested in community amenities that support its resident's quality of place. The municipality established the North Middlesex Shared Services Centre in 2014 as the new home for the municipal offices, County library, and Service Ontario office. This new building allows these operations to share costs, enhance services to their constituents, and instil a sense of collaboration in the community. The existence of North Middlesex's sports programs and facilities encourage community engagement and build community.

Health and Wellness Hub

The two main small urban centres in the primarily rural community, Ailsa Craig and Parkhill, serve as the commercial centres of this geographic area. This concentration is most notable in the health and wellness sector where the communities are drawing customers and patients from an increasingly larger regional area. This offers increased opportunity for more foot traffic and greater sales potential for the other nearby businesses.

“I really like the concept of making Parkhill the focus of a rural health community hub.”

***Parkhill
Business
Operator***

7.1.2 Weaknesses

Limited Commercial Businesses and Underperforming Downtowns

North Middlesex's market size is not sufficient to support a broad commercial sector. Residents are forced to leave the community to access preferred goods and services that are not available in the community. This retail leakage further limits the potential of retailers in North Middlesex. There are numerous vacancies in the downtown areas and several of the vacant storefronts are in disrepair.

Declining Population, Limited Working Age Concentration

North Middlesex's population declined in the last two consecutive census periods, in contrast to County and provincial trends. The shrinking population means a decreasing tax base and increased tax burden for individual taxpayers. It also means a shrinking local market for commercial goods and services.

There is a smaller share of the population in the prime working ages of 20 to 44 years of age in North Middlesex compared to the County and province. The limited labour pool, combined with a low unemployment rate, means that existing employers and prospective businesses have difficulty attracting the skilled workers they require.

Investment Readiness

The CAO is responsible for economic development in North Middlesex with the support of the North Middlesex Economic Development Advisory Committee. The CAO has many competing priorities however, and there is not a dedicated staff person responsible for the economic development program.

Prior to the development of this report, Council had not established an economic development vision and strategy for the municipality. Since 2015, an on-line business directory has been updated. The municipality has also begun work on a vacant lot study (the first step in developing an available property inventory). The Municipality has created and purchased some promotional items and initiated a communications program with student and contract staff. More work is required to expand the depth and breadth of economic development data available on the municipal website and supporting social media including an available properties database, more comprehensive community profile data, and a regularly updated business directory.

The municipality's development process is not understood and was identified as a barrier to community growth during the community consultation process. A dedicated economic development staff person would act as the primary contact for business and prospective investors, and assist in navigating the development process.

“We need change and we need new residents.”

Business Owner, Parkhill

Without a dedicated economic development resource, North Middlesex is missing the opportunity to engage and lead relevant community organizations in coordinated economic development efforts.

The municipality's residential development charges are not competitive compared to similar sized neighbouring municipalities.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure to support growth is not sufficient to support further residential and commercial growth. Stakeholders recognized the need for high speed Internet throughout the municipality to support existing and new business investment. It is also critical to support home based and agricultural businesses in the community. There is a lack of shovel-ready industrial land in the community.

Lack of Coordinated Economic Development Efforts

There are a number of regional economic development organizations providing programs and services that could benefit the business community in North Middlesex. Without a local champion to educate and inform local businesses of the programs, North Middlesex businesses may not benefit from these services. Further, there are a number of service clubs, business organizations, social, and cultural organizations in North Middlesex that could play an active role in supporting community development initiatives, but currently lack the resources to harness their efforts towards a collective vision.

7.1.3 Opportunities

Business Retention and Expansion

Roughly half of the businesses that completed the community survey indicated their intentions to expand in the next 2 years. Conventional economic development wisdom informs us that the majority of new employment comes from existing businesses. These two factors are a preliminary indication that the business community would welcome a formal Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program. This program would help to identify those companies that would benefit from assistance in expanding their operations while also identifying those companies facing challenges, providing the municipality with an opportunity to intervene and assist in their turnaround. Further a BR&E program is an opportunity to rally the community and actively engage in their community's economic development efforts, and inform Council of any red-flag issues that could hamper economic growth.

***“The
Municipality
needs to be the
leader in
economic
development.”***

***Parkhill
Business
Operator***

Build on the Agricultural Expertise in the Community

North Middlesex is recognized for its strength in agriculture production and processing. Consumer demand for local goods and produce, artisanal foods, and other goods is growing. There is an opportunity to build upon this strength and consumer demand by encouraging value-added agriculture production and alternative crops development. These initiatives can be supported through planning policy and incentives such as agriculture specific community improvement plans and a relaxing of permitted uses of agricultural lands. The provincial government's agri-food mandate and programs like *Growing Forward 2* provide further support for qualifying projects.

North Middlesex does not currently have a farmer's market. A farmer's market in Parkhill could provide local goods for North Middlesex residents and the transient tourist market travelling to Grand Bend and other Lake Huron destinations.

Residential Development

Residents and community stakeholders are very supportive of increasing the population in North Middlesex with a range of residential options. The concentration of North Middlesex residents employed in the construction industry suggests that there are individuals with expertise in residential development that could champion this initiative in cooperation with the Municipality.

The aging population and increasing farm size provides an opportunity to provide residential development for the growing senior population that wish to stay in the area. North Middlesex could encourage this type of development through an age-friendly community program.

Council could consider a host of policy changes to encourage residential development including assisting developers through the development process, reviewing permitted uses and density guidelines in residential areas, and conducting a development charges review to ensure the municipality remains competitive with neighbouring regions.

London residents wishing to escape the bustle of the large city for the rural amenities of North Middlesex would be a natural target for a resident attraction program. The continued growth of the city will create an increased appeal for small town living, lower real estate prices, and an escape from the city's traffic congestion. The growth of home based businesses and small businesses create opportunities for successful entrepreneurs.

“North Middlesex needs to reach out to the agricultural base and continue to develop it. It is the main driver of the economy.”

North Middlesex Resident



Community Networks

Beyond physical assets, North Middlesex has a vibrant network of community groups and associations that lead and support a wide range of community programs and activities. The strong volunteer base of service clubs, cultural, and sports organizations drive many of the community building efforts in the municipality. For example, The Ailsa Craig Business Association changed its name to the Ailsa Craig Village Association to reflect its dual role in supporting commercial and community initiatives. Several Parkhill businesses and residents expressed a desire to re-establish a Parkhill Association to plan programs and activities in Parkhill, and work cooperatively with the Ailsa Craig Village Association for larger programs.

Ailsa Craig and Parkhill serve as the commercial centres and offer local access to goods and services to locals and those travelling through the communities. Expanding this commercial base with additional amenities serves to increase the vibrancy of the area.

The various community groups could be encouraged to contribute to the development of North Middlesex through community development programs including special events, downtown clean-up programs, fundraising campaigns, trail development, and public art programs.

Leverage Regional Organization Supports

There are a host of regional programs with the potential to support the municipality's economic development efforts including the following:

- Regional Tourism Organization (RTO1), Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC); tourism marketing and product development
- Middlesex County Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Business Help Centre; small business financing, coaching, workshops, and a Downtown revitalization administrator
- Middlesex County Economic Development; regional economic development initiatives
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs; municipal economic development programming and agricultural business support
- Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board; workforce development, workforce data, and sector reports
- Strathroy and District Chamber of Commerce and Grand Bend Chamber of Commerce; business networking, advocacy, and related services

“We need barrier free housing for seniors.”

North Middlesex Farmer

Other organizations that align with the economic development mandate include London Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council, Western Ontario Wardens Caucus, South Central Ontario Region, London Homebuilders Association, and the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture.

North Middlesex could actively participate with these organizations to leverage the programs and support they provide for the municipality and local businesses. Active participation with these organizations will also raise the profile of North Middlesex among the membership and bring additional opportunities forward.

Community Development Funding

The new wind farm Vibrancy Fund could provide a financial boost to North Middlesex. Applying this new revenue stream to community building projects would further enhance the community's economic development efforts. Programs such as low or no interest loans for business façade improvements, supports for business start-ups, and community partnership funds would foster community pride, encourage community development activity, and encourage business investment. Programs can range from marketing and branding supports, assistance with Downtown strategy development, and policies that allow for restoration of facades, streetscaping, parking, and encouraging safe and walkable communities. Strong relationships should be developed with the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs in order to better understand and access community building and downtown revitalization programs that exist. This should be pursued in collaboration with local businesses, Middlesex County, and the community association.

7.1.4 Threats

Declining Agricultural Employment and rural populations

The significant drop in employment in the agricultural sector in North Middlesex is consistent with the experience across Ontario. Increasing farm sizes and technological gains have resulted in smaller numbers of workers employed in the agriculture sector. Larger farming operations are displacing many family farms, making the rural residences redundant. Declining numbers of rural residences affects the market for local businesses (including agriculture goods and services), school enrolment, and demand for government services. It also results in a declining contribution to municipal tax rolls.

“The large feed building in the centre of Ailsa Craig can be redeveloped or reused.”

***North
Middlesex
Resident***

Potential High School Closure

The North Middlesex District High School (NMDHS) enrolment numbers are declining. The Thames Valley District School Board (TBDSB) is projecting further enrolment declines for the high school through to 2019 leaving enrolment at less than half the 350 students required for the board target of 70% school capacity. In November 2015 the TBDSB identified the North Middlesex District High School for “potential facility collaboration.”²¹

A report to the TVDSB outlined the challenges in program viability with declining enrolment. “Smaller secondary schools are challenged in offering a wide variety of courses since the Ministry of Education allocates the majority of school Board revenue based on student enrolment numbers.”²²

“Fewer students also results in expanded operating expenses, as the TVDSB must maintain buildings with significant empty pupil places. The size of the school effects program viability and the costs involved to operate several smaller schools spread over a wide geographical area as opposed to one school with a larger enrolment.”²³

The size and budget of a school has a significant economic impact in a rural community such as North Middlesex. They have been proven to contribute to overall retail sales, labour supply, and residential and commercial land values in the community. The social activities surrounding schools unite residents and provide a collective identity for the community. A move to centralized or regional schools has also been shown to decrease citizen involvement in the daily operation of the schools. The loss of the high school would also impact North Middlesex’s ability to attract and retain families with school age children.

The Community Schools Alliance was established by Ontario municipalities to address challenges associated with the process that school boards use to determine which schools in a municipality stay open, which ones get closed, and where new schools will be located.

Many communities are identifying creative opportunities for reusing educational facilities including private schools, on-line adult learning locations, entrepreneurship incubators, and new residential developments.

²¹ Thames Valley District School Board Annual Pupil Accommodation Report, November 24, 2015.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Residential Development Dependent on the Private Sector

Residential development in North Middlesex requires investment by private landowners. Despite the municipality's desire to increase the population, residential development is stalled. Private landowners have very different motivation (than the Municipality) for investing in residential development in North Middlesex.

Unlike the municipality, which is motivated to increase the local population, the property developers consider factors such as return on investment and competing investment opportunities. They will be particularly sensitive to what they perceive to be high development charges and cumbersome development processes and policies.

The concern over 'red tape' or perceived unnecessary barriers to development was a common theme during the consultation process. Prospective investors and businesses do not understand the distinction between municipal and provincial development regulations and requirements. The municipality could provide additional support and direction to assist developers in navigating the complex development process.

“North Middlesex is going to have to foot some of the bill for this for the betterment of the Municipality.”

***North Middlesex
Farmer***



7.2 Competitive Advantages and Disadvantages

The following section builds off of the SWOT Analysis above. The concept of competitive advantages and disadvantages allows the municipality to more effectively pinpoint how North Middlesex can begin to differentiate itself against its competitors. Where many neighbouring communities may have similar strengths and experience similar weaknesses, the competitive advantages and disadvantages can often highlight the differences.

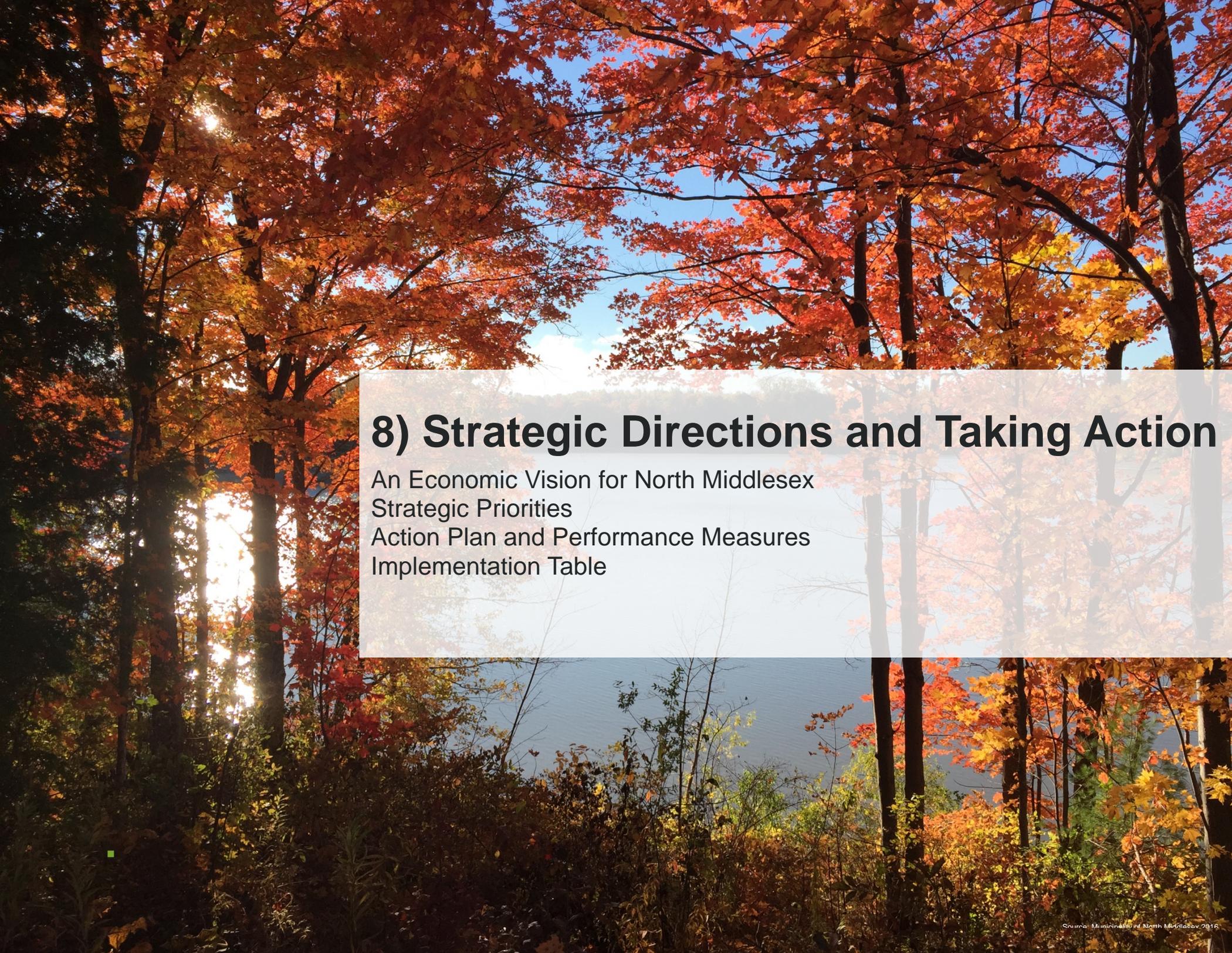
In order to support local industries and continue to foster growth, it is important that North Middlesex focus its economic development efforts by capitalizing on the advantages and working to overcome its disadvantages. It is necessary that North Middlesex work to fully understand its competitive disadvantages, and where at all possible, seek to mitigate these factors and assist the local economy in overcoming the associated challenges. Further, a key element to successful investment attraction is fully recognizing the benefit to industry that the local advantages play, and in turn, to leverage these advantages in a targeted manner to successfully attract more businesses that will equally benefit from them.

Competitive Advantages

- High employment levels
- Higher income levels (community wealth) primarily from the agriculture sector
- Proximity to Grand Bend and the tourism market
- Proximity to the growing City of London
- Strong community spirit with demonstrated success
- Investments in community assets and amenities: Town Hall, libraries, recreation facilities

Competitive Disadvantages

- Lacking the critical mass to support a diversified commercial base
- Distance to major highway and larger urban centres (isolated)
- Concentrated in agriculture with a decreasing employment base
- Demographic shift – aging population and decreasing population
- Residential development is stalled and dependent on the private sector
- Higher development charges than neighbouring jurisdictions



8) Strategic Directions and Taking Action

An Economic Vision for North Middlesex
Strategic Priorities
Action Plan and Performance Measures
Implementation Table

8 Strategic Directions and Taking Action

8.1 An Economic Vision for North Middlesex

An important aspect of any strategic plan is the establishment of a vision statement. This acts as the rallying call, or unifying declaration of the municipality's overarching economic objectives, and is intended to guide the community, its stakeholders, and the Municipality in its decision making. It represents a desired future state for the economy of North Middlesex.

Throughout the strategic planning process and at every engagement stage, the community, stakeholders, and businesses of North Middlesex were asked to describe their economic vision for the municipality. They were also asked to describe the measures of success of their economic development efforts through a series of 'vision goals'.

The following economic vision statement has been developed for the Municipality of North Middlesex to reflect the process and outcomes identified above:

North Middlesex is known for its diversified, export-focused agricultural sector; two vibrant Downtown commercial centres underpinned by small business and entrepreneurship; and ongoing residential and employment growth supporting an increase in population and economic opportunity.

As described above, North Middlesex will know that it is moving closer to achieving the economic development vision when it is moving toward the following set of goals. These goals have been constructed to reflect the alignment between the community's voice and the Municipality through the engagement process. Significant care was taken to ensure that the common themes which emerged from the community based strategic planning process were cross referenced with the decisions and outcomes of the planning activities with Council, Senior Management and staff, and the Economic Development Advisory Committee. What is presented below is drawn from all sources of research conducted.

North Middlesex will know its economic development programming and efforts are having a positive effect, and that the community is moving closer to achieving its economic vision when the following goals are being met:

- *Diversification of the economy and agricultural industry*
- *Improved access to high speed internet*
- *Effective marketing and promotion of the community*
- *A sustainable and growing small business base*
- *Increased local employment and local population*
- *New residential development and affordable housing*
- *Support for senior populations and leveraging opportunities related to seniors*
- *Youth attraction, supporting increased school enrolment*
- *Available, zoned, serviced, and shovel – ready lands*
- *Celebrating a high quality of life and an affordable place to live*
- *Efficient development administration*
- *Healthy and thriving commercial Main Streets (Downtowns)*
- *Increased commercial amenities, entertainment, and lifestyle services to satisfy local consumers and visitors*
- *Increased visitations, new destination marketing initiatives in place, and unique tourism opportunities being leveraged*

8.2 Strategic Priorities

On November 25th, 2015 a strategic planning session was held with Municipal Council, the Senior Management Team, and Economic Development Advisory Committee. The group was presented with the refined findings from the various engagement and research processes conducted and taken through a collaborative, interactive, and democratic planning session with the Queen's Executive Decision Centre. The purpose of this was to establish:

Our vision is working when ...

“North Middlesex is a vibrant and thriving farming community that offers an alternative to the city lifestyle.”

North Middlesex Business Person



- The key priorities for economic development over the next five years
- What actions and initiatives should be established to achieve these priorities
- How we will know if our economic development efforts are successful

The strategic priorities for the 2015 – 2020 North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy as determined at the workshop are:

- 1. Build the economic development capacity in North Middlesex**
- 2. Infrastructure for industry and residents (including high speed internet availability)**
- 3. Ensure the community is attractive to new residents and businesses**
- 4. Business retention and expansion and supporting entrepreneurship**
- 5. Marketing and promotion of North Middlesex**
- 6. Ensure sustainable residential housing growth and diversity**

When reflecting back on the North Middlesex Economic Development Vision, the strategic priorities can be clearly aligned with the vision, and are grounded in its essence and language. This is an essential element to ensure that the Recommended Initiatives and action plans below directly support the incremental movement toward achieving the vision goals, and ultimately the Municipality's ability to effectively recognize the Economic Development Vision for the community.

The following section provides specific initiatives and actions that Council, Senior Management, and the Economic Development Advisory Committee identified during the facilitated strategic planning session. The initiatives were further validated through research and engagement and have been augmented where appropriate to ensure that they accurately reflect the community and internal engagement contained in this report.

***Our vision is working
when we have ...***

***“A memorable downtown
core that is visually
appealing and has a
vibrant business
community.”***

***North Middlesex Business
Owner***

8.3 Action Plan and Performance Measures

This section of the report provides an action plan that has been developed for each of the strategic priorities identified above. These priorities act as strategic objectives, accompanied by specific actions or initiatives that are required to move the Municipality closer to achieving its vision and corresponding goals.

Each of the action plans contains a priority level, which reflects the recommended timing for the action to be initiated. Given ongoing environments of fiscal restraint, limited funding resources, and competing priorities between community growth and core service delivery, these priority levels recommend the starting point only, and may not indicate final completion. It is fully recognized that some of the recommended initiatives may take one, two, or three years to complete, or may even span the life of the current strategy and be carried over into the next planning period.

Priority levels are defined as the following:

- Immediate
- Within One Year
- Within 3 Years
- Between 3 – 5 Years

The action plans also include columns that reflect a potential champion for each recommended initiative and prospective partners. The purpose behind these is to strengthen lines of accountability as the recommended initiative is grounded in a position or organization that will be responsible for leading the initiative – in other words, they take ownership and champion the cause. Those who appear in the Partnerships column are various stakeholders (both internal and external to the Municipal Corporation) whose involvement is seen as important, if not critical to the success of the initiative.

There are specific roles and responsibilities that will need to be assigned to each of these partners, and these will need to be determined and finalized in concert with Municipal Leadership and Council. However, in order to support the Municipality in establishing these, the following framework identifies what the recommended roles and responsibilities of the actors within the municipal environment:

- Council – strategic planning and decision making
- Staff – implementing initiatives
- Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) – liaison in an advisory capacity on initiatives
- Middlesex County – regional resource for supporting initiatives

Further, each action plan is accompanied by a corresponding set of key performance measures. These measures are designed to assist the municipality in tracking its progress with individual initiatives and their implementation over time.

This plan has been developed as a living document. It is recommended that the municipality review and revise the action plans on a regular basis adjusting for internal and external changes that may impact on the timing and ability to successfully carry out the recommended initiatives over the life of the economic development strategy.

Establishing a Foundation for Economic Development in North Middlesex

An important aspect of ensuring that the Municipality is prepared to act on this economic development strategy is to ensure that the necessary foundation is in place, both internally and externally. Economic Development as an activity and a profession is broad and multifaceted. In order to see the most success and return on investment it requires that various organizations and stakeholders in a community all work towards common goals, while maximizing their individual strengths and contributions. From an internal perspective, it necessitates that all staff understand the meaning and purpose of economic development, and that it is a team sport, where the most success is obtained when all members recognize their roles, and where they can have the greatest impact.

It also requires a commitment to the financial and human resources necessary to effectively execute upon the plan, and to see the various initiatives and actions through to completion. Economic development is very much a relational endeavour, and benefits greatly from a consistent and positive level of ongoing engagement with local industry and vested community stakeholders.

A key element to success is in identifying gaps, and that action is taken to address the missing elements. The strategic priority, “Build the Economic Development Capacity of North Middlesex” and its associated recommended initiatives have been included below in order to assist North Middlesex in laying the necessary economic development building blocks to effectively support implementation of the strategic plan.

8.3.1 Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex

Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Hire a dedicated staff person responsible for economic development services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Economic Development Officer (EDO) is an essential part of the Municipal team. The EDO is responsible for the execution of the Economic Development Strategy, coordinating multi-stakeholder efforts to support initiatives, and acting as internal/external liaison to Municipal departments Provide leadership for municipal economic development initiatives, implement action plan, represent municipal economic development actions and report on economic development efforts 	<p>Immediate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)
<p>Provide staff support to Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) and make resources available to community groups with an economic development mandate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify community groups with an economic development mandate. Bring together community groups to introduce the completed economic development strategy and identify areas of mutual interest including resident attraction, communication programs special events with tourism potential and shop local programs Support the Ailsa Craig Village Association to maintain and expand its small business and community efforts Leverage the Ailsa Craig Community Quilt Festival (run by volunteers) to expand its local impact as a tourism driver for North 	<p>Within 1 year / Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Municipal Council Community groups Service clubs Middlesex County Tourism Middlesex Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation – RTO1 (SWOTC)



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Middlesex through collaboration with the County, Barn Quilt Trail, and the RTO1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase the leadership capacity of North Middlesex in its economic development mandate, ensure buy-in and alignment of community groups under the strategy, and increase human resources needed to support initiatives 			
<p>Ensure North Middlesex representation and participation in regional economic development programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify and build relationships with regional, inter-regional and provincial economic development partners with common mandates including Middlesex County, SWOTC, OMAFRA, CFDC, Chambers of Commerce, ROMA, Chambers of Commerce and the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board ■ Identify opportunities to leverage resources and funding available to achieve shared goals with the Middlesex County Economic Development Strategy 2014-2019 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For example, Developing Community Based Tourism, Supporting Small Business, and Expanding BR&E Programming ■ Join provincial and national economic development associations and participate in regional meetings and training ■ EDO and EDAC should seek opportunities to sit on Advisory Boards of key regional organizations such as the SWOTC, CFDC, Elgin Middlesex, Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board (among others) to heighten awareness of North Middlesex initiatives 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CAO ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Municipal Council ■ Middlesex County ■ Tourism Middlesex ■ Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation – RTO1 (SWOTC) ■ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) ■ Middlesex County Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) ■ Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board (EMOWDPB) ■ Chambers of Commerce ■ Ailsa Craig Village Association



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>and identify areas for collaboration on shared goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to match local Agri-food companies with the OMAFRA <i>Growing Forward 2</i> program to increase agricultural innovation locally Explore opportunities to participate in OMAFRA and other provincial economic development programs including First Impressions and the Rural Economic Development Program 			
<p>Provide economic development training to Municipal Council, Management and Staff, and Economic Development Advisory Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the understanding of the theory and process of economic development by local decision makers, leaders, and practitioners is an important foundation for successful collaboration, budgeting, planning, and execution of the strategic plans actions Source professional economic development training through Economic Developers Council of Ontario, Economic Developers Association of Canada, OMAFRA, and private firms to deliver 1-3 hour sessions Explore ongoing training and certification as professional development for key economic development staff Establish a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities for economic development including the distinction between reporting relationships for staff and Committees 	<p>Within 1 year / Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Economic Development Officer Municipal Council
<p>Solicit community participation in resident attraction, business retention and expansion and other economic development</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Economic Development



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Community champions and local ambassadors play a critical role in supporting the attractiveness of an area to newcomers and new investments ■ Actively recruit key community members to support economic development initiatives as mentors and advisory committee members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mentors, advisory committee members, and volunteers illustrate that the entire community is behind the efforts of the Municipality 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advisory Committee ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Municipal Council ■ Community Associations ■ Ailsa Craig Village Association ■ Local Businesses ■ Residents and Community Leaders

Key Performance Measures

- Economic Development Officer Hired
- North Middlesex participants attending regional economic development meetings
- Increased collaboration between community groups and North Middlesex
- Staff participates in formal economic development training program
- Economic development included in Council training and orientation programs
- North Middlesex project committees include community representatives



8.3.2 Infrastructure for Industry and Residents (including High Speed Internet)

Ensuring the community has the necessary level of infrastructure in place to support current demand from residents and businesses, as well as carefully planning for the allowance of future growth is a key municipal function. In an interconnected world and rapidly changing workforce that is adjusting to economic shifts, it is important to ensure that a community can meet the need for high speed internet accessibility. Not only has this become an essential criterion for businesses in citing locations, it is now of key importance for population location decisions. In order to support future growth and attract new residents, knowledge workers, entrepreneurs, and companies, North Middlesex will need to ensure that it has the necessary infrastructure in place.

Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Engage in private sector discussions with regard to extending high speed into rural areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage private sector telecom providers (such as the Independent Telecommunications Providers Association (ITPA) and Execulink Telecom) to identify alternative solutions to expanding internet access 	Within 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Municipal Council
<p>Conduct an internet infrastructure audit to determine service levels, gaps, priorities and potential private sector partners</p>	Within 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Planning Public Works Middlesex County
<p>Partner with other communities and levels of government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify projects with potential for future provincial and federal infrastructure funding programs Open (or extend) dialogue with Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus to explore potential for the Ontario SWIFT initiative to benefit expansion of high speed internet in North Middlesex and determine timelines Begin discussions with neighbouring municipalities and County staff 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Municipal Council Middlesex County Tourism Middlesex Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Western Ontario Wardens’



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
to obtain program knowledge and seek partnership opportunities			Caucus (WOWC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA) ■ South Central Ontario Region (SCOR) ■ Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure

Key Performance Measures

- Discussions on high speed internet connectivity with private sector underway
- Infrastructure audit completed
- Council infrastructure training delivered
- Council has identified high priority infrastructure investment opportunities in anticipation of provincial and federal funding
- North Middlesex representatives are active participants in regional infrastructure discussions



8.3.3 Ensure the Community is Attractive to New and Existing Residents and Businesses

As urban centres become larger and population density increases, rural (and formerly rural) municipalities across Southern Ontario are aggressively competing for newcomers and increased employment opportunities. Municipalities are building on emerging trends including residents seeking life outside urban cores and increased immigration of workers, skilled professionals and entrepreneurs all looking for ideal environments to call home and raise families, is to know what your community offers and promote it to the outside world. Establishing North Middlesex as a community of choice requires effective promotion, careful coordination, and active planning.

Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Promote assets outside of the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish comprehensive economic development website ■ Liaise with key investment attraction and tourism organizations to identify areas for collaborative cross-promotion ■ Align efforts with North Middlesex Communications Plan <p>(See also Marketing and Promotion of North Middlesex)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish a database of available commercial/ industrial properties in North Middlesex ■ Consider open houses and marketing programs to promote vacant downtown locations ■ Inform local and regional realtors of investment opportunities and economic development activities ■ Build a promotional package for prospective developers ■ Develop and share community profile, business directory, available properties and developer's guidelines (electronic format) ■ Conduct annual update of promotional materials and data 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Economic Development Advisory Committee ■ Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) ■ Downtown landlords ■ Real Estate community ■ Middlesex County



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Make the municipality a destination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish a resident attraction and retention committee ■ Conduct the OMAFRA Newcomer and Youth Community Attractiveness Indicators Assessment ■ Inclusion of Youth (for example, supporting Youth Entrepreneurship, youth groups, Junior Achievement, youth (16-25 years) representative for EDA Committee ■ Participate in Age Friendly Communities initiatives ■ Engage service clubs and other volunteers in expanding community assets to address identified gaps ■ Establish a high school retention initiative in consultation with the Ontario Community Schools Alliance and other similarly affected communities ■ Coordinate with Middlesex County to host familiarization tours for provincial and national trade and immigration officers to meet with local businesses and community leaders in order to promote North Middlesex as an ideal location for new investment and location * ■ Feasibility study for senior lifestyle development ■ Ensure maintenance and attraction of Health & Wellness facilities and programs 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>* Within 3 years (this action only)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Economic Development Advisory Committee ■ OMAFRA ■ Service clubs ■ Local businesses ■ Youth organizations ■ Local schools and school Board ■ London Middlesex Immigration Partnership ■ Local construction companies ■ Landowners
<p>Prepare a recreation master plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct an asset mapping exercise and comparative analysis of recreation amenities in the County to allow North Middlesex to focus on its strengths and filling gaps ■ Ensure effective alignment with the capital budget process and 	<p>Within 3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CAO ■ Recreation ■ Service clubs ■ Residents ■ Middlesex County



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
community growth projections to identify anticipated needs that will enable growth and maintain resident demands			

Key Performance Measures

- Recreation Master Plan completed
- Resident Attraction and Retention Committee established
- Newcomer and Youth Community Attractiveness Indicator Assessment completed
- Age Friendly Communities programming underway
- Community Groups providing human and financial resources for investments in quality of place amenities gaps identified through various assessments



8.3.4 Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship

A cornerstone of the practice of economic development is in the process of actively supporting industries with growth, encouraging expansion, and actively contributing to the retention of local companies. Conventional economic development wisdom informs us that the majority of new employment comes from existing businesses. Further, nearly half of the businesses that completed the community survey indicated their intentions to expand in the next two years. This strongly indicates the need for North Middlesex to establish a formal Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program. This program will assist in identifying companies that will benefit from support in expanding their operations while identifying challenges faced by local firms, providing an opportunity for the Municipality to intervene and assist in their mitigation. Further a BR&E program is an opportunity to rally the community and actively engage in the community's economic development efforts and inform Council of any red-flag issues that could prevent economic growth.

Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Build business awareness and access to education and financial resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure easy local access to business information is available Increase company awareness of business resources, funding and training Provide information on business support services on North Middlesex website Ensure access to business support materials through North Middlesex libraries 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex County Libraries Middlesex County Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board (EMOWDPB) Chambers of Commerce Ailsa Craig Village Association
<p>Support local businesses (get on the street) via consultation, workshops, communication, resources (e.g. Business plans)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with regional partners (Middlesex County, CFDC, MFA, Chambers, libraries and others) to offer business and entrepreneurship services locally 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex County CFDC MFA Chambers of Commerce Libraries



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote business development programming to local business community ■ Promote Downtown revitalization program to downtown businesses ■ Educate small medium sized businesses on diversification as a means of responding to opportunities ■ Connect local businesses with educational facilities (e.g. University of Western, Fanshawe College, Lambton College) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local businesses
<p>Develop business workshops and programming specifically targeting the agricultural sector including agriculture specific funding programs, entrepreneurship, succession planning, alternative crops, agri-tourism and value added processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coordinate with Middlesex County and OMAFRA to deliver workshops (such as Exploring Value-Added Opportunities) to local agricultural industry ■ Collaborate with the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture and local farmers to identify ways to address local agricultural Land Use Policy issues while maintaining farmland preservation and industry innovation 	<p>Within 1 year / Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Middlesex County ■ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) ■ Middlesex County Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) ■ Middlesex Federation of Agriculture (MFA)
<p>Conduct a formal business retention and expansion exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan and execute an annual corporate calling program where the EDO visits local businesses ■ Ensure Client Relationship Management software is used to gather local intelligence and effectively manage key data ■ Coordinate local company success stories with Mayor and Council and include local politicians in company visits where 	<p>Within 3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Advisory Committee ■ Community volunteers ■ Local businesses ■ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and administer annual business survey to create an ongoing loop of feedback on economic development needs, challenges, and service delivery 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Middlesex County
<p>Encourage and develop a strong community/business association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dedicate resources to supporting the expansion of the Ailsa Craig Village Association into a North Middlesex Community and Business Association ■ Open dialogue with Ontario Chamber of Commerce to consider Chamber of Commerce services and coverage to North Middlesex and surrounding areas similar to the Strathroy and District Chamber which also serves West Middlesex ■ Collaborate with North Middlesex Business Connects to encourage and develop a strong community/business association 	<p>Within 3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Advisory Committee ■ Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Local businesses ■ Municipal Council ■ Middlesex County ■ Ontario Chamber of Commerce ■ Strathroy & District Chamber of Commerce
<p>Create and implement a Shop Local program in all areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a ‘Shop Local’ marketing campaign including cooperative programming, consistent community marketing materials, cross-store and cross-community promotions ■ Host networking and business-to-business events ■ Leverage the County business directory and increase awareness for North Middlesex companies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify opportunities for accessing the County Business Directory through the North Middlesex 	<p>Within 3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Economic Development Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Residents ■ Ailsa Craig Village Association ■ Local businesses ■ Local wellness businesses and services ■ YMCA ■ Recreation



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage local participation in the County Directory <p>(See also Marketing and Promotion of North Middlesex)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a feature business program to highlight successful local businesses Support the establishment of a community wellness co-operative marketing and events program 			
<p>Establish business grant or loan programs for new and existing business funded in part with Vibrancy Fund money</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Community Improvement Plan targeting downtown development Explore loans and funding mechanisms supportive of value added agriculture 	<p>Within 3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Middlesex County Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Middlesex Federation of Agriculture (MFA)
<p>Develop Agri-business Strategy, encourage development of agri-businesses and value-added products to encourage diversification, advocate opportunities for the agricultural sector in niche marketing, farm-gate, “farm-preneurship”, look at the viability of a Farmers Market</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed

Key Performance Measures

- Formal Business Retention & Expansion program implemented



- Increased business participation and uptake of business support services and training
- North Middlesex Community Association established and operational
- North Middlesex actively participating and contributing to Community Association meetings and events.
- Community Improvement Plan established with active business participation
- Shop Local program established with active business participation
- Local businesses accessing small business support programs
- Agri-businesses accessing government funding programs and expanding value added processing.

8.3.5 Market and Promote North Middlesex

Heightening awareness of the strengths, assets, and opportunities that your community has to offer is a key aspect of effective economic development. As mentioned previously in this report, economic development is very much a team sport, and requires that the Municipality actively leverage opportunities to feed off of existing promotional and marketing vehicles, as well as engage in its own, targeted and proactive measures. A necessity in this endeavour is a clear understanding of the community value proposition, who your target audiences are, and how to reach them. It is also about understanding the community's differentiation points and what the comparative advantages are that North Middlesex offers in a broader regional context.

Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Communications and branding plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish communications plan with target audiences, key messages, tactics and timelines ■ Expand communications and branding plan to include a targeted economic development communication plan with relevant messaging to raise awareness to economic development and to showcase economic development initiatives, business success stories, and local impact ■ Create a marketing and promotions plan ■ Incorporate online / social media in communications tools ■ Establish North Middlesex website as the primary tool for economic development materials ■ Use social media to inform and engage target audiences on economic development programs and events with additional details on website ■ Establish reciprocal online and social media support for local businesses, community organizations and regional economic development partners 	<p>Within 1 Year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CAO ■ Business associations ■ Local businesses ■ Community associations ■ Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an e-newsletter that is distributed to local stakeholders, residents, partners, the business community, and external audiences informing on upcoming activities and events, new businesses, expansions, and investment opportunities (see www.norfolkbusiness.ca) Create a Wayfinding Signage Strategy including additional Tourism-Oriented Directional Signing (TODS) as appropriate 			
<p>Events promotion and tie-in with neighbouring communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate on County and inter-regional initiatives (e.g., culinary trails, quilt and barn quilt trails, cycling tours etc.) in order to heighten awareness and increase opportunity Identify opportunities for cross-promotion of events and place-based attractions with regional tourism organizations 	Within 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer Neighbouring communities Middlesex County Chambers of Commerce Service clubs Ailsa Craig Village Association Tourism Middlesex
<p>Participate in Tradeshows and business to consumer, business to business opportunities at local venues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate exhibits and trade networking opportunities in established community events Consider establishing a community farmer’s market targeting local residents and the summer tourist market Leverage the unique aspects of two downtown locations and develop unique experience based tours/events to increase commerce, awareness, and traffic flow 	Within 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Middlesex County Service Clubs Ailsa Craig Village Association Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Middlesex County Community Futures Development



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect to existing festivals and broader regional initiatives to increase awareness, exposure, collaboration, and opportunity 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporation (CFDC) Middlesex Federation of Agriculture (MFA)
<p>Undertake Increased Tourism Promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine means of assisting local businesses in the development of a home grown North Middlesex tourism or destination experience Explore ways to capitalize on the traffic travelling to and from tourism destinations around North Middlesex such as the Grand Bend area and traffic travelling from the US to Stratford Identify Tourism opportunities with Agriculture sector to promote Agri-tourism 	<p>Within 3 – 5 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Advisory Committee Neighbouring communities Middlesex County Chambers of Commerce Service clubs Ailsa Craig Village Association Tourism Middlesex Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Middlesex County Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Middlesex Federation of Agriculture (MFA)

Key Performance Measures

- Communications plan established and operational



- Economic development information on North Middlesex website expanded
- North Middlesex communications tools expanded to include social media channels
- Community Profile, Business Directory, Available properties inventory and developers guidelines prepared and shared through communication programs
- Economic development publications updated annually
- Expanded networking and sales opportunities for local businesses
- Business case for a local North Middlesex tourism destination experience developed with buy-in and support from local business and agriculture sector
- Wayfinding Signage Strategy created and implementation underway

8.3.6 Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity

One of the greatest challenges North Middlesex faces rests in its aging demographic and declining population. In order to expand the community’s opportunities for growth and sustainability it is imperative that efforts are taken to increase the population base and attract more families, youth, and professionals to the area. In order to expand commercial offerings (that in turn accelerate the attractiveness of the municipality to residents, the self-employed, and business alike) North Middlesex will need to ensure that the necessary population thresholds are met to ensure new investors with a reasonable expectation of profit potential and local purchasing power. Further, it will be equally important to encourage a variety of affordable housing offerings in order to support a diversity of population growth along various socio-economic levels.

Planning for this requires that the Municipality have a firm understanding of how it can grow, and ensuring that the necessary policy and regulatory environment is in place, and that plans are in place to direct the necessary capital expenditures to facilitate this growth. It will also be necessary that the Municipality build strong relationships with local land owners, and fully understand what their motivations are, and how development can be most effectively encouraged along timelines that align with population growth objectives.

Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<p>Review current development fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Undertake a Development Charges Study that also examines the competitive positioning of North Middlesex in comparison to its neighbouring municipalities in the County ■ Conduct a competitive analysis of development costs with target communities seen as investment competitors 	<p>Within 1 year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CAO ■ Public Works ■ Municipal Council ■ Economic Development Advisory Committee ■ Middlesex County
<p>Undertake Official Plan review and Land Needs Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Build on County employment land needs assessment (2012) to determine land needs for additional land classes (residential, agricultural, institutional) ■ Establish community growth plans in priority growth areas 	<p>Within 3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CAO ■ Economic Development Officer ■ Municipal Council



Recommended Initiative	Priority Level (initiated by)	Potential Champion	Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate residential housing mix based on needs assessment 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Advisory Committee Middlesex County
<p>Attract developers to make use of vacant residential land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find local champion with development expertise to assist with campaign creation and implementation Identify and meet residential land owners Establish a cooperative resident attraction marketing program <p>(See also “Ensuring the community is attractive to new residents and businesses”)</p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Development Officer Economic Development Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Municipal Council Real Estate community Landowners Middlesex County Local Businesses
<p>Develop tax incentives/promotions to encourage residential development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Community Improvement Plan encouraging residential development 	Within 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAO Economic Development Officer Middlesex County

Key Performance Measures

- Land Needs Assessment completed
- Review of development fees completed and recommended changes implemented
- Community Improvement Plan established and implemented
- Developers accessing Community Improvement Plan funding
- Residential land development negotiations underway



8.4 Implementation Table

Recommended Initiative (Action)	Strategic Priority (Objective)	Timeline (initiated by)
Hire a dedicated staff person responsible for economic development services	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Immediate
Communications and branding plan	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 1 Year
Provide staff support to Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) and make resources available to community groups with an economic development mandate	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Within 1 Year / Ongoing
Engage in private sector discussions with regard to extending high speed into rural areas	Infrastructure for Industry and Residents (including High Speed Internet)	Within 1 Year
Develop business workshops and programming specifically targeting the agricultural sector including agriculture specific funding programs, entrepreneurship, succession planning, alternative crops, agri-tourism and value added processing	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 1 Year / Ongoing
Review current development fees	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Within 1 Year
Provide economic development training to Municipal Council, Management and Staff, and Economic Development Advisory Committee	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Within 1 Year / Ongoing
Conduct an internet infrastructure audit to determine service levels, gaps, priorities and potential private sector partners	Infrastructure for Industry and Residents (including High Speed Internet)	Within 3 Years
Prepare a recreation master plan	Ensure the Community is Attractive to New Residents and Businesses	Within 3 Years
Conduct a formal business retention and expansion exercise	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years
Encourage and develop a strong community/business association	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years
Create and implement a Shop Local program in all areas	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years



Recommended Initiative (Action)	Strategic Priority (Objective)	Timeline (initiated by)
Business grant or loan programs for new and existing business funded in part with Vibrancy Fund money	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Within 3 Years
Events promotion and tie-in with neighbouring communities	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 3 Years
Participate in Tradeshows and business to consumer, business to business opportunities at local venues	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 3 Years
Undertake an Official Plan review and Lands Needs Assessment	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Within 3 Years
Develop tax incentives/promotions to encourage residential development	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Within 3 Years
Undertake Increased Tourism Promotion	Market and Promote North Middlesex	Within 3 – 5 Years
Solicit community participation in resident attraction, business retention and expansion and other economic development initiatives	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Ongoing
Promote assets outside of the community	Ensure the Community is Attractive to New Residents and Businesses	Ongoing
Ensure North Middlesex representation and participation in regional economic development programs	Build the Economic Development Capacity in North Middlesex	Ongoing
Partner with other communities and levels of government	Infrastructure for Industry and Residents (including High Speed Internet)	Ongoing
Increase awareness and access to resources for business	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Ongoing
Support local businesses (get on the street) via consultation, workshops, communication, resources (e.g. Business plans)	Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship	Ongoing
Make the municipality a destination	Ensure the Community is Attractive to New Residents and Businesses	Ongoing
Attract developers to make use of vacant residential land	Ensure Sustainable Residential Housing Growth and Diversity	Ongoing

9 Conclusion

The Municipality of North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy 2015 – 2020 (the Strategy) was developed along a five year timeline. This means that the Municipality, its partners, residents, businesses, and all of its vested stakeholders will need to work together effectively and collaboratively in order to support the Strategy's recommended initiatives within the lifetime of the plan.

Implementation of the action plans outlined above will begin with Municipal Council's adoption of the Strategy, followed by the adoption of the responsibility for implementation by Municipal staff under the leadership of the Chief Administrative Officer. Further, as is identified above, there are potential Champions and prospective Partnerships that are assigned to the various Recommended Initiatives in the action plans. The potential Champions will be responsible for leading and championing the individual action items, and the partners reflect community actors whose active cooperation will be required in order to successfully achieve the targets.

It must be understood that the success of the Strategy is also predicated on the ability of the Municipality to finance the initiatives, and allocate and approve the necessary resources required for execution in the annual budget. As municipalities operate in an increasingly difficult, and often austere monetary environment with multiple competing priorities and interests, the ability to act on specific strategic priorities will need to be balanced with considerations toward core service delivery, and competing municipal financial demands.

Performance measures are allocated to each of the Strategic Priorities and their corresponding action plans. This allows Council, Municipal staff, the Economic Development Advisory Committee, and the community to gauge the progress of specific initiatives and identify whether the community is moving closer towards its goals. As taxes generally represent the principle means of revenue generation for a municipality, they also reflect the primary source of funding for local programs and services, as well as what is required to operate and maintain the assets of the municipality. It is important to understand that all programs have costs associated with them, and that increased programming can often result in tax increases once savings through efficiencies are exhausted.

The North Middlesex Economic Development Strategy has been designed as a working strategy that is used extensively to provide direction, coordinate activities, and track accomplishments. As the municipality does not operate in a vacuum, but as part of a broader economy and a globalized world, the Strategy exists as a living document that is meant to be reviewed annually, monitored and adjusted as appropriate to reflect changes, shifting trends, and new municipal realities faced by North Middlesex. When nearing the horizon of the Strategy, it will be important that the Municipality once again engage the community, and begin

the process of mapping accomplishments, identifying challenges, and beginning the renewal phase for the following five year window in order to maintain the momentum generated through this inaugural strategy and its foundation.



The image shows a bright, modern library interior. In the foreground, a woman is seated at a curved service desk, working on a computer. The desk is dark wood with a light-colored tiled floor in front of it. To the right, a red and blue display cart holds various items. In the background, there are bookshelves and a sign that reads "ADULT FICTION LARGE PRINT". The ceiling features recessed lighting and a long, curved light fixture. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title and list of contents.

Appendix: Technical Report

Strategic Innovation in Municipalities
Policy and Background Review
Demographic Characteristics
Occupational Profile
Business Patterns Assessment
Community Consultations
Stakeholder Interviews

10 Appendix: Technical Report

10.1 Strategic Innovation in Municipalities

Innovation is thriving in today's communities, where municipalities utilize innovation as a means for staying ahead. The goal is to create prosperous neighborhoods that attract thriving businesses and productive citizens with high-quality education, jobs, healthcare, safety, responsive government, and other amenities that fuel sustainable economic growth.

Innovation is also needed to help local governments:

- Better understand citizen and business needs and build services around them
- Increase connectivity between people, businesses, and the community
- Create flexible and adaptive development processes
- Increase opportunities for collaboration among community and business stakeholders
- Share and reuse government assets and services, and
- Promote open data

Achieving these goals requires the skilled use of scarce public resources, particularly when budgets are increasingly constrained, and local governments are now facing global competition in attracting new businesses and workers. Moreover, success can put even greater strain on local governments, because the influx of businesses and jobs increases demands on schools, roads, public transportation, utilities, police, hospitals and other services. Testing new ideas and ways of responding to local demands demonstrates a calculated risk approach that pushes the boundaries and demands new or enhanced ways of doing things. This is not done without careful consideration of what is required, as compared to the expected return on investment. However it demonstrates innovative approaches, which is something that is being tested more and more as municipalities focus on creating communities that attract new businesses and residents, better serve existing businesses, all while ensuring it has the capacity to support current and future growth.

Municipalities can differentiate themselves from other communities as a leader in innovative government practises and policies. The following section explores a number of innovative programs or initiatives utilized by select municipalities. These are provided as examples of the type of innovative approaches that North Middlesex may choose to investigate when considering the implementation phase of the strategic priorities identified in this Economic Development Strategy. Although not exhaustive, this provides a foundation for North Middlesex to investigate further examples if desired.

10.1.1 Strategic Priority: Infrastructure for Industry and Residents

10.1.1.1 Recommended Initiative: Engage in private sector discussions with regard to extending high speed into rural areas & Partner with other communities and levels of government

We as a society now depend on the Internet for almost everything we do, ranging from entertainment and business, to education and health services. In this current environment, businesses and residents look for communities that have reliable and fast Internet connectivity when making key location, or relocation decisions.

One innovation in providing fast and reliable connectivity is the [Eastern Ontario Regional Network \(EORN\)](#) created by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC), where its mission is to provide higher speeds and bandwidth to at least 95 per cent of homes and businesses in Eastern Ontario. EORN includes a 5,500-km network of new and existing fibre optic cable, with 160 new access points for Internet service providers. High-speed Internet services for residents and businesses are delivered through wired, wireless or satellite technology, depending on the best fit for the area. What is unique is that EORN has negotiated with local and regional Internet service providers to increase the coverage area, bandwidth and speed, and at the same time bridging the urban-rural price gap that exists. Although some measures are in place, and steps being taken by the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus and the SWIFT initiative, there may be some learnings that could be taken from the Eastern initiative to support local discussions.

Another innovation in high speed internet availability is the ongoing and innovative partnership between the [Town of Hanover and Wightman Telecom](#). This partnership was developed as a result of the need to increase Internet connectivity to attract new business and industry into Hanover. Through this partnership the Town of Hanover is ensuring that their Industrial and Business Park is connected with the best fibre optic connection possible. This partnership has helped the Town of Hanover secure their first Industrial and Business Park tenant, a high-tech medical facility.

10.1.2 Strategic Priority: Ensure the Community is Attractive to New Residents and Businesses

10.1.2.1 Make the Municipality [of North Middlesex] a Destination

The attraction of new residents and businesses is important to the economic viability of a municipality. This can be of even greater importance for those municipalities that may be encountering difficulty in retaining their current residents and businesses. Although most, if not all municipalities, market themselves as being open and inviting to new residents and business, not all make a concentrated effort in developing resources or initiatives to attract or provide information.

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent has taken an innovative approach to attracting and providing information to new residents. As a part of the [Municipality's website](#), Chatham-Kent has a webpage dedicated to resident attraction and retention, specifically for newcomers. The webpage provides all and any information a newcomer may need from employment, education, cultural events and supports, and newcomer stories. What is especially innovative about Chatham-Kent's strategy is the availability of resources and documents in multiple languages. The inclusion of resources in languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, Korean and Spanish provides Chatham-Kent with the ability to reach a significantly larger audience by providing information in a multilingual format.

Like Chatham-Kent, Perth County, in collaboration with the Town of Stratford and the Town of St. Mary's have developed a stand-alone website that is specifically geared towards resident and business attraction. [Opportunityliveshere.ca](#) is an innovative and technology-driven approach to attracting residents and business where their attraction is focused on three groups: Canadian newcomers, young professionals and recent graduates, and business owners and entrepreneurs. This unique approach of targeting specific demographics has allowed Perth County, the Town of Stratford and the Town of St. Mary's to dedicate time and resources specifically to attracting individuals that those communities have identified as being critical to their economic success and viability.

10.1.3 Strategic Priority: Business Retention and Expansion and Supporting Entrepreneurship

10.1.3.1 Create and Implement a Shop Local Program in all Areas

Shop local and buy local campaigns are a great way of increasing local resident awareness of local businesses that offer services and products in the community. Such knowledge is positioned to influence spending on local goods and services. Although shop

local programs are not new to municipalities, municipalities are becoming much more creative in the development and implementation of such programs.

One community that has taken an innovative approach to their shop local program is Northumberland County. The [Buy Local Northumberland Campaign](#) was created to effect change in the habits of both consumers and businesses by increasing awareness among local residents of the value in spending on goods and services available in the community. Unique to this program is the inclusion of target metrics to assess the success of the program. This includes increasing awareness to 1 in 5 (20%) of people surveyed within one year of the launch of the campaign, and the goal of having 5,000 citizens to redirect their goods and services spending currently made outside the community to Northumberland County by an average of by \$25 per month (\$300/year). This goal would see an additional \$1.5 million injected into the local economy, and as a result has seen significant support as individuals continue to “Take the Challenge” and support Northumberland businesses.

10.1.3.2 Conduct a Formal Business Retention and Expansion Exercise

Like resident attraction, many if not most municipalities market themselves as being supportive and cognizant of their local businesses. However, many do not have formal programs that support the retention and expansion of local businesses, and even fewer have dedicated personnel to administer and manage the program. Yet it is important for municipalities to provide services and support as existing businesses in most Canadian communities can create as much as 80% of new jobs. Local businesses are the engines of economic growth for communities and set the stage for the local business climate and a community’s quality of life.

One program that has been highly innovative and successful is the Grow Guelph Business Retention and Expansion ([Grow Guelph BR+E](#)) program. Launched in November, 2013, the Grow Guelph BR+E program was established as a community-wide effort to investigate issues and concerns of, as well as opportunities for, local businesses. This program has helped the City of Guelph and its economic development partner agencies set priorities for projects that address the needs of business and ultimately improve the profitability of local businesses in Guelph.

This program includes a fully formalized task force team that has multi-stakeholder representation from local businesses, chambers of commerce, provincial ministries, immigration and workforce planning boards, and post-secondary institutions. This allows the program to effectively and quickly address the concerns and needs of local business in Guelph. As well, the Grow Guelph BR+E program has a formalized survey process called the Business Visitation and Survey program. It is community-wide program to survey the needs, concerns, and future plans of Guelph’s business community, where each survey is roughly one hour and is conducted by two visitors from the Grow Guelph Task Force. These results are then used to help address issues, barriers or enhance opportunities where they have been identified.

Another innovative approach is that they have ensured that the branding of the Grow Guelph BR+E program aligns with their current economic development branding, as well as their Invest Guelph program. This has provided consistency among all economic development programs and has increased name and program recognition among community stakeholders.

10.1.3.3 Develop Business Workshops and Programming Specifically Targeting the Agricultural Sector Including Agriculture Specific Funding Programs, Entrepreneurship, Succession Planning, Alternative Crops, Agri-Tourism and Value Added Processing

Ensuring that agricultural businesses have access to supports and resources that assist them in creating innovative products and services is increasingly becoming a role that municipalities need to fill. As where businesses are unable to receive the support or resources to innovate, they will simply look elsewhere to do so.

Northumberland County and their [Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre](#) is a great example of an innovative approach to supporting the agricultural sector. The Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre is not-for-profit small-batch food processing facility that is supporting farmers with fruit and vegetable value-adding opportunities to increase farm revenue, helping foodies with recipe development and working with food processing start-ups and expansions in Ontario with R&D, test batch and small batch co-packing capacity.

This innovative facility located in the municipally owned Colborne Industrial Park includes a solar panelled roof and a unique physical presence which has allowed a significant degree of profile. Not only a place for packaging and processing, the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre provides designated space for private distributors, meeting and office space, and technology access for e-commerce activities and health and safety standards compliance and adherence. Innovation at the Centre is driven by having on-site food processing expertise during product development, production, and processing. This expertise is provided through the food processing programs that are offered at nearby post-secondary institutions, specifically Durham College and Loyalist College. By creating a space that connects agricultural producers and value added processors with academic and industry expertise, Northumberland County has demonstrated its ability to take innovative approaches to supporting its local industry.

10.1.4 Strategic Priority: Market and Promote North Middlesex

10.1.4.1 Event Promotion and Tie-in with Neighbouring Communities [i.e., Regional Collaboration]

Promoting events happening within the community is something all municipalities have routinely done and it is an area in which many communities have been successful. Whether it has been hosting a successful event, using a catchy tagline, or simply

getting the word out through traditional or new media platforms, municipalities have recognized the relationship between successful events and festivals, and a high quality of life. As a result, municipalities are now more than ever marketing and advertising the events happening in their community – and not just to their own community, but to others as well.

One community that has taken the lead in promoting itself and its events is Norfolk County through its extensive social media presence. Norfolk County has made significant effort to increase its online presence through platforms such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube. Norfolk County's Tourism & Economic Development Division earned Best Technology and New Media for the Norfolk County Video Library available on their [YouTube page](#). The video clips were developed to be used by any [Norfolk County tourism](#) attraction initiative to help promote the area to visitors. CBC's Nature of Things was the first outside video producer to take advantage of this library. What is highly innovative is that Norfolk County has a significant presence on TripAdvisor where they have over 4,500 reviews and opinions on Norfolk County as a destination. Resources are provided by Norfolk County Tourism and the webpage branding is also consistent with that of Norfolk County Tourism and Economic Development.

This dedicated effort has had significant recent success as the British Grammy Award winning band Mumford & Sons, decided on [Norfolk County](#) to host the only Canadian stopover in their Gentlemen of the Road Tour. The immense success of the event was highlighted by the Economic Developers Council of Ontario for their achievements in collaboration and partnership. EDCO awarded Best Public-Private Partnership in the Collaboration & Partnership Awards category to Mumford & Sons, Live Nation, Norfolk County Fair & Horse Show, Norfolk County and the Downtown Simcoe BIA for the Gentlemen of the Road Simcoe Stopover. Tens of thousands of visitors came to Norfolk County in the days leading up to and after the event to explore the area. This innovative and award winning approach to regionally collaborating on event promotion was so successful that it generated an estimated economic impact of over \$10 million during the festival.

10.2 Policy and Background Review

10.2.1 Municipality of North Middlesex Official Plan, Office Consolidation June 2014

The Municipality of North Middlesex was inaugurated on January 1, 2001. Its formation was one of several significant restructured municipalities within Middlesex County, bringing together the former Townships of East Williams, McGillivray and West Williams, the Town of Parkhill and the Village of Ailsa Craig. This plan contains goals, objectives and policies established primarily to manage and direct physical change and the effects on the social, economic and natural environment of the Municipality or part of it. The goals of the Official Plan are to:

- Create a planning framework that promotes a flexible and adaptable economic environment to encourage investment and a broad range of employment opportunities, protects the dominance of the agricultural industry, and protects other rural resources
- Promote the health and well-being of the Municipality and its residents through the planning and development of strong, efficient and healthy communities and associated services
- Enhance and protect the quality of the natural and built environment, while providing for the changing needs of the community

As the primary purpose of the Official Plan is to guide and direct land use planning, as a guiding policy, it plays an important role in supporting the direction of economic development efforts. The following are the economic development objectives of North Middlesex's Official Plan:

- Ensure the continued economic strength of agriculture in North Middlesex
- Foster tourism potential through the protection and augmentation of the Municipality's unique characteristics
- Encourage visitors to come to and stop in the Municipality by providing for appropriate uses that may attract and promote tourism
- Promote the development of new businesses and economic activities that are not currently available in the Municipality
- Encourage the expansion and diversification of industrial and commercial development in order to maximize employment opportunities
- Promote employment opportunities that utilize products from existing businesses in the Municipality
- Give priority to road and servicing improvements that increase the potential for employment-related growth and development
- Provide employment lands with access to major roads and other transportation facilities

Key Findings

Economic development is one of the important underlying components of the planning framework of the Official Plan for North Middlesex. As agriculture has been the principal economic activity in the municipality, the policies of this Plan promote the protection of agriculture, provide flexibility to accommodate the evolution of the agricultural industry, and encourage the diversification of the economy.

The following are the economic development policies for North Middlesex contained in its Official Plan. These policies can support North Middlesex in achieving objectives related to agricultural development:

- This Plan envisages that agriculture will continue to be the principal economic activity in the Municipality. The Municipality will support, protect and promote agricultural activities

- The Municipality will monitor the supply of employment and industrial land to ensure that a sufficient supply is available to flexibly accommodate potential future needs
- Employment and industrial lands will be focussed in Urban Settlement Areas and will be located adjacent to or in close proximity to Provincial Highways and County roads
- Council will co-operate with the business community to ensure that employment areas are well served by appropriate infrastructure, including municipal services, roads and modern telecommunication technologies
- The Municipality will promote balanced residential, farm, commercial and industrial land bases to provide long-term stability to Municipal finances, promote growth in the tax base and to reduce the need for out-commuting
- The Municipality will promote healthy and attractive communities, with a high standard of design to increase tourism interest and attract investment
- In order to protect agricultural and other business operations and activities, this Plan will prohibit residential and other sensitive land uses from locating in general agricultural, industrial or business areas or adjacent to existing operations
- The Municipality will promote the economic health and well-being of the Central Areas in Ailsa Craig and Parkhill. Specifically, the Municipality will support the creation of Business Improvement Associations. Council may consider preparing Community Improvement Plans, in accordance with the policies of Section 9.4 of this Plan, for areas including the Central Areas of Ailsa Craig and Parkhill
- By taking advantage of the incentive-based initiatives available from the Province, the remediation, conversion and reuse of derelict industrial and other brownfields sites in the Municipality is strongly encouraged and supported by the policies of this Plan
- In order to respond to changing economic conditions, this Plan maintains a flexible land use framework, to be implemented through the Zoning By-law, to accommodate evolving land use needs

10.2.2 Municipality of North Middlesex Strategic Plan, March 2012

In December 2011, members of Council and senior municipal staff met with a facilitator at the Ailsa Craig Community Centre in a strategic planning workshop. The draft Strategic Plan that emerged from the workshop was reviewed by Council and senior staff, amended and a final draft presented to Council for approval in March 2012. The Strategic Plan is guided by the following vision of North Middlesex:

“A thriving, progressive community”

This vision provides the common cause and purpose that allows all stakeholders of the Municipality to move forward together to build a better quality of life and a more sustainable community for current and future residents of North Middlesex. A mission statement, on the other hand, informs the reader as to the essence and fundamentals of North Middlesex as to its purpose and focus. Every strategic and operational decision that North Middlesex makes needs to align with and be supportive of its mission. The following mission statement was developed for the Municipality of North Middlesex:

“We are a welcoming community committed to achieving a valued quality of life and creative economic opportunities”

Principles within the Strategic Plan for North Middlesex have three applications. First, they allow further opportunity to give greater definition and understanding of key dimensions of the mission statement. Second, they identify how the Municipality and the community view each other, will interact, and how they will create and build relationships and capacity.

Third, they provide a decision making framework through which the Municipality's strategic and operational decisions should be viewed in order to be consistent with its Principles and Values. The following principles were developed for the Municipality of North Middlesex:

- Our Heritage and Strengths
- Cohesive Community
- Inclusive and Caring
- Agriculture and Business
- Innovative Culture
- Quality Community Services
- Local Accountability

Key Findings

Strategic directions identify the actions and priorities that the Municipality of North Middlesex needs to focus on over the next five years in order to further the achievement of the previously mentioned vision and mission. In terms of economic development, the following strategic directions and objective were identified for the Municipality of North Middlesex for the 2012-2015:

- 1. To develop a North Middlesex specific Economic Development Strategy that will materially improve the economic future of the community**
 - a. Pursue economic development opportunities associated with the strengths and capacities of the agriculture industry
 - b. Facilitate population and business activity growth, ensuring all Plans, By-laws and related activities support growth and are aligned with the public good
 - c. Focus on land development opportunities that utilize existing infrastructure investments and open up hidden assets
 - d. Undertake economic development and marketing promotional strategies that support the key target industries and activities that emerge from the Economic Development Strategy

- 2. To undertake key Municipal infrastructure development initiatives that supports a better future**
 - a. Finalize the Water Service Financial Plan and undertake its implementation
 - b. Ensure that roads and other infrastructure development approved by Council is supportive to the key directions and outcomes of the Economic Development Strategy
 - c. Initiate the development of new Municipal facilities and venues that replace aging and costly infrastructure, respond to accessibility requirements and act as a potential catalyst for economic development

- 3. To pursue organizational development and capacity building initiatives within the Municipality that support economic development, growth and the community's quality of life**
 - a. Undertake an assessment of current technology systems and operational/services procedures, and develop benchmarks as a means to enhance the productivity and efficiency of municipal services and procedures
 - b. Develop a new branding strategy for the Municipality, and formulate and develop improved internal and external communication strategies that are audience-based, align with the technology initiatives above, and overcome some of the challenges identified with communication across such a broad geographical area

- 4. To actively facilitate, in partnership with community organizations and residents, the capacity building and engagement strategies necessary in building North Middlesex's future**
 - a. Advocating strongly for the retaining of the schools and public services within North Middlesex
 - b. Working through partnerships to extend the availability of seniors and children's and youth services
 - c. Working with the business community, actively promote the availability and importance of local business, recreation, professional and other services to a sustainable community

- d. Working with community organizations to enrich volunteerism within the community, support community events and promote the sustainability of community service organizations
- e. Working to sustain the valued natural environment of North Middlesex

An important element to this research is ensuring that the directions and objectives outlined in the section above are explored further for the current level of completion and adopted into the current economic development plan.

Given the timeframe of the Strategic Plan, and that it is close to renewal, it will also be valuable to reassess the actions, and validate their suitability for inclusion. As time passes, it may be that certain directions may require refinement, or no longer hold the same level of priority.

Further, a number of actions above may benefit from collaboration with County initiatives and resources.

10.2.3 Municipality of North Middlesex Asset Management Plan Final Report, March 2014

In 2014, North Middlesex received its Asset Management Plan for the municipality which is a relatively new provincial requirement as outlined within the *Ontario Building Together Guide for Municipal Asset Management Plans (2012)*. The purpose of this Plan is to serve as a strategic, tactical, and financial document ensuring the management of the municipal infrastructure follows sound asset management practices and principles, while optimizing available resources and establishing desired levels of service. The following asset classes of North Middlesex are addressed in this plan:

- Road Network (Paved, Unpaved) : 464.6 kilometers
- Water Network: 465 kilometers
- Sanitary Sewer Network: 22.5 kilometers
- Storm Sewer Network: 23.4 kilometers
- Bridges and Culverts: 54 structures

Key Findings

The estimated replacement value of the Municipalities assets that were listed above is estimated at almost \$311 million. Where each asset's value is estimated as follows:

- Roads (Paved only): \$16,596,740
- Water Network: \$188,390,170

- Sanitary Sewer Network: \$11,479,930
- Storm Sewer Network: \$18,552,616
- Bridges and Culverts: \$75,890,036

Based on asset management plan's results and the recommended 2% yearly investment in maintenance, theoretically the Municipality should allocate around \$6.2 M per year to ensure future sustainability of its assets. With that being said, a current needs analysis was completed to understand the needs within the upcoming year for the Municipality infrastructure, and to identify the existence of any backlog. The following are the current needs of the Municipality's infrastructure:

- Road Network
 - Sections in need: 0
 - Estimated Expenditure: \$0
- Water Network
 - Section in Need: 4
 - Estimated Expenditure: \$207,834
- Sanitary Sewer Network
 - Sections in Need: 0
 - Estimated Expenditure: \$0
- Storm Sewer Network
 - Sections in Need 0
 - Estimated Expenditure: \$0
- Bridges and Culverts
 - Structures in Need: 13
 - Estimated Expenditure: \$2,848,627

As can be seen from the North Middlesex Strategic Plan 2012 above, there are a number of potential overlap areas that need to be assessed between these policies. In order to support potential growth opportunities, actions that focus on the development of opportunities that "utilize existing infrastructure investments and open up hidden assets" can work to leverage network areas (such

as roads) that are not in forecast expenditure areas, and benefit from those that will require necessary expenditures regardless (such as the water network).

10.2.4 County of Middlesex Official Plan, Consolidated August 2006

The County of Middlesex is located in the heart of southwestern Ontario and comprises an area of approximately 284,464 hectares. The County is a federation of 8 local municipalities. Agriculture is the predominant land use and economic mainstay in the County. Consequently, the protection of the farming community and agricultural land represent major thrusts in the policies of this Plan. The Official Plan, which establishes a broad, long term vision for the County, includes specific objectives for land use planning and focuses on developing a strengthened role for planning at the County level. Through this strengthened role the County will be able to establish a balance between long-term growth and development and the conservation of key resources.

The following objectives have been established for land use planning and emphasize key components that will contribute to a healthy community:

- The protection of the agricultural community
- The management of growth
- A vibrant economy

The Middlesex County Official Plan is one tool to be used in working towards the long term vision for the County. The Plan directs and guides the County in land use policy and physical planning on a broad basis. The Plan is intended to:

- Establish an upper tier policy framework that provides guidance to the local municipalities in the preparation of local Official Plans and Zoning By-laws; and
- Set a framework for coordination and cooperation amongst the local municipalities and the County on planning and development issues that transcend municipal boundaries

This Plan recognizes the value of integrating land use issues, including resource management, with ecosystems in order to develop an ecological approach to planning which will enable development to proceed within the County on an environmentally sustainable basis - so that the needs of today will not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Key Findings

Agriculture has been an economic mainstay in the County for many years and will continue to evolve as changes to the agricultural industry take place. In this time of change it is important that the County develop diversity in its economic base. The policies of this Plan are intended to protect the agriculture community while fostering new economic development opportunities. Through the policies of this plan the County intends to:

- Monitor the supply of employment land to ensure that a sufficient supply is available throughout the County and particularly in those municipalities with access to provincial highways and major arterial roads
- Cooperate with local municipalities, the business community and other agencies to ensure that employment centres are served by modern infrastructure systems including road, rail, and telecommunications networks
- Encourage local municipalities to provide a balanced mix of housing to ensure a sufficient labour force and reduce the need for commuting
- Encourage local municipalities to promote a high standard of urban design to create healthy communities which attract investment
- Support local municipalities to promote economic development opportunities adjacent to Provincial 400 series highways where justified through an amendment to the local official plan
- Support the retention of educational, health, cultural and religious facilities to ensure that the County's communities are provided with those opportunities that facilitate growth and well-being. Such facilities provide a vital role in small communities and add economic vitality and a sense of place where quality of life is considered a major attraction for growth and development

According to Schedule A of the Official Plan the settlement areas (urban and community) in North Middlesex are: Parkhill, Nairn, and Alisa Craig.

As well, the County is projecting that North Middlesex is expected to see a population of 7,370 in 2026.

Within the Official Plan, the County designates Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), which are areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features that have been identified as having life science or earth science values related to protection, scientific study, or education. North Middlesex has the following ANSI:

- Ausable River Area is a large forested and ravine area in the northwest part of the County generally located in the Broken Front Concession between County Roads 12 & 18.

10.2.5 County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategic Plan, January 2014

An economic development strategic plan was developed for Middlesex County in 2013. In particular, the 2013 Strategic Plan is focused on: providing a vision for the delivery of economic development services; identifying the core business areas for the Economic Development Department; and guiding the economic development activities and investments for the County.

Building on the County's Official Plan's vision, the Economic Development Strategic Plan advances the following vision statements:

"Middlesex will leverage its strategic location in the attraction of new business, investment and skilled workers while protecting and retaining its countryside image and community spirit."

"Middlesex will leverage the lifestyle choices, economic vitality and natural environment that make the County an attractive place to live, work and do business."

"Middlesex will foster economic diversification efforts that enhance the strengths of the regional economy and build on the County's history of entrepreneurship to provide resilient employment and investment in the region."

The Middlesex County's Economic Development Strategic Plan is underpinned by three high level goals, intended to anchor all strategic initiatives or ensuing actions on the part of the County's Economic Development Office. The following goals guide the County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategic Plan:

- A Supportive Environment for Businesses and Investment
 - Enhance the County's competitive advantage for attracting and retaining business and investment in its traditional and emerging sectors
- A Proactive and Targets Approach to Business Growth and Attraction
 - Implement an investment attraction program that is focused on sector opportunities with a history of competitiveness and export orientation or demonstrates potential for growth.
- A Commitment to Community Sustainability and Growth
 - Build community capacity for economic growth and development through effective leadership and communication.

Key Findings

In the creation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Middlesex County, nine priorities emerged which would help in planning economic development for the future. These priorities represent the areas that most directly affect the long term economic vitality of the County and are as follows:

- Invest in the County's Infrastructure
- Enhance Communication and Networking Opportunities
- Broaden Business Retention + Expansion Programming Effort
- Leverage Proximity to London
- Pursue Targeted Investment Attraction Opportunities
- Develop Community Based Tourism
- Support Sustainability of Small Business
- Focus on Workforce Attraction
- Expand Understanding of County's Agricultural Sector

A comprehensive analysis of the local and broader regional and provincial economy was conducted as a part of this Plan. It details the County's recent performance against a select range of demographic and economic indicators considered relevant to the development of the economic development strategic plan, combined with an analysis of current and emerging business and industry sector trends. The analysis concluded:

- While strong population growth is often a factor in an investment attraction decision, the historic trends suggests that population growth varies across the County, with North Middlesex experiencing a loss in population
 - North Middlesex has experienced a more consistent loss in population, with a total of more than 240 fewer people, representing 3.5% of the population over the ten year period (2001-2011)
- The percentage of immigrants arriving in Ontario and moving to the London Economic Region as a whole is increasing; however, Middlesex County is lagging in the attraction of new Canadians, which means local businesses will need to recruit from the City of London
- The top five industries by employment for Middlesex County residents are health care and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade, construction, and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
 - The construction sector comprises the highest number of businesses with employees, while agriculture comprises the largest number of total businesses

- Manufacturing operations are the County's largest employers, with 5 businesses employing 200-499 employees, and 5 businesses employing 100-199 employees
- 29.6% of Middlesex County's local labour force is comprised of creative class workers

10.2.6 County of Middlesex Employment Land Needs Study, April 2012

An Employment Land Needs Study was completed in 2011. The report concluded that the existing land inventory in the County of Middlesex was sufficient to accommodate the anticipated future demand for employment lands. The report also suggested that the amount, location and market choice of serviced lands would need to be monitored to ensure that supply met the ongoing demands of business.

Recommendations with implications for the development of the County's most recent Economic Development Strategic Plan (2014) are as follows:

- Market choice and employment land protection, including:
 - The adoption of a framework for reviewing employment land conversions
 - Modification of County-wide land use policy to allow for select commercial, accessory retail, and community institutional uses in employment areas
 - Ongoing and regular monitoring of employment land inventory to ensure adequate market choice
- Targeted marketing of employment areas, including:
 - Development of a system for tracking County-wide development-related data
 - Preparation of more comprehensive marketing materials and centralized resources to highlight vacant and available employment lands and identify employment areas
 - Greater regional and sector-specific collaboration on industrial and employment lands marketing activities
 - More targeted marketing of high-priority employment areas
- Longer term planning and development of employment lands, including:
 - Consideration of short- to medium-term servicing of Komoka West employment lands
 - Study into medium- to long-term options for employment land development in Thames Centre and along the Highway 401 corridor

- Consideration of longer-term development opportunities in South Ilderton subject to market choice and employment land inventory

Key Findings

Employment areas in North Middlesex are generally small and more oriented towards single industrial services uses, with existing employment uses concentrated in Parkhill and Ailsa Craig. There is approximately 16 gross hectares of vacant employment land across all of North Middlesex.

Parkhill's existing employment uses are along Elginfield Road, with additional vacant industrial lands to the north of the community along Parkhill Drive. Employment uses in Ailsa Craig are focused along Elginfield Road/Main Street, and are generally limited to smaller industrial service and commercial uses.

Ailsa Craig has approximately 4.6 hectares (11.3 acres) of industrial lands to the north of Elginfield Road/Main Street currently occupied by the Ailsa Craig Co-op facility.

Middlesex Employment Lands

- Proportionate Share of the County's Net Vacant Employment Lands Supply: 2% (13 net ha)
- Proportionate Share of the County's Fully Serviced Net Vacant Employment Land: 1% (2 ha)
- Proportionate Share of the County's Serviced Shovel-Ready Net Vacant Employment Lands: 1% (2 ha)
- Total Employment Land Need over 2011 to 2031: Surplus of 9 ha

The high LQ in the County's agricultural sector can be explained by the County's prevailing strength in farming and agricultural related activities. As of 2006, North Middlesex had a very high labour force LQs of 10.84. Similar to the labour force LQs, employment LQ for the agricultural sector is proportionally very high in North Middlesex with a LQ 17.89.

Total employment forecast for North Middlesex from 2011 to 2031 will see total employment grow by 65 over the 20 year time period. This will account for 1% of all of Middlesex County employment growth and where North Middlesex will see a 0.2% increase in employment annually.

10.2.7 Foreign Direct Investment Report for Middlesex County, July 2011

The County of Middlesex Foreign Direct Investment Strategy was completed in 2012 and suggests that the County is moderately well positioned for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) attraction. Recommendations include:

- Strengthen economic development function:
 - The County should strengthen the core of its diverse economic foundation and assure that the primary businesses in its basic sector are positioned for success
- Selective Proactive International Marketing:
 - The County should engage in selective, highly targeted international marketing initiatives to increase access to prospective investors and active opportunities. This will enable Middlesex County to gain early visibility to prospects and their opportunities and increase the number of locational investment leads considering the County
- Develop Investor Customer Service Excellence:
 - To distinguish itself from competitors, the County should achieve excellence in responding to potential investment opportunities by developing high standards for servicing investors. In a highly competitive environment, areas providing prompt and complete request for information responses and site visits that anticipate customer needs gain advantage.
 - The economic development team at the County and local levels must be able to respond quickly with accurate and complete data and to convey competitive advantage to requests from prospective investors and their representatives

10.2.8 Working Together to Build Tomorrow's Workforce: Defining a Labour Market Strategy for the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Region, September 2014

Working Together to Build Tomorrow's Workforce is an action plan of workforce related priorities for the Elgin Middlesex Oxford region. Key priority areas were identified by the business community in the Labour Market Planning Board's catchment area which includes the Counties of Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford. Four themes emerged from the labour market planning process:

- Accessing Talent
- Skills Development

- Understanding the Labour Market
- Systems Solutions

The 2015 action plan was designed to address the themes mentioned above in terms of the issues highlighted in the labour market strategy for the London Economic Region. Some of the labour market issues are as follows:

- Youth unemployment rates are much higher than the unemployment rates for the general population
 - The unemployment rate for the 15 to 24 age demographic in the London Census Metropolitan Area in 2013 was over twice the rate for the 25 to 44 age demographic
- Employers primarily use informal recruitment methods or online tools, potentially losing out on good candidates due to the limitations of these processes
 - Top methods of recruitment: Word of Mouth, Personal Contacts, and Referrals
- There is a perception that some youth lack the core competencies that youth require for today's workforce
- There were 18,238 businesses with municipalities 1 to 50 employees in the EMO area as of June 2014. This represented 95% of all businesses with payroll employees
- Rural areas are concerned about attracting people to their areas and in ensuring that youth take advantage of the opportunities that exist in the rural areas
- Employment in the trades is increasing in the local area following a drop in 2010 to 2011. Employers reported a modest amount of hiring in apprenticeship and the trades expected for 2014

Key Findings

Top 10 Trades – New Registrations in the London Economic Region (Middlesex, Elgin, and Oxford)

- Automotive Service Technician
- Hairstylist
- Electrician: Construction & Maintenance
- Information Technology: Contact Centre Service/Sale Agent
- Plumber
- Truck & Coach Technician
- Child Development Practitioner

- Industrial Mechanic Millwright
- Cook

Employer Change in Middlesex County

- Number of Employers 2013: 28,917
- Number of Employers 2014: 29,533
- Absolute Change: 616
- **Percent Change: 2.13%**
- **Ontario Change: 3.77%**
- Highest Gains in Employers by Industry: Religious, Grant-Making, Civic, Professional & Similar Organizations (15.18%)
- Highest Losses in Employers by Industry: Animal Production: (-8.25%)

10.2.9 County of Middlesex Agri-Food Economic Impact Report, March 2015

An Agriculture Sector Strategy for the County of Middlesex was developed in 2015. As part of the development of this strategy an economic impact assessment of the Agri-food sector in the County of Middlesex was required. The report provides an in-depth economic impact assessment of the contribution the Agri-food sector makes to the County of Middlesex's overall economic condition.

Agri-food is a cornerstone of the economy of the County of Middlesex with over \$1.2 billion in total economic impact. This extends to \$547 million in Gross Domestic Product, 7,822 total jobs and \$290 million in wages and salaries.

The Agri-food industry—primary production through to food processing—is the largest employer in the County of Middlesex and accounts for 15.2% of total employment. The County is very primary production focused with farm employment accounting for 71% of the total Agri-food jobs.

The Agri-food industry is a clear advantage for Middlesex County with a Location Quotient (LQ) rating of over 4, while all other major industry groups have a LQ less than 1.5. The employment profile of London complements the County of Middlesex. Middlesex is strong at the primary production end of the scale, whereas London is strong in the Agri-food processing sectors. Together, the region offers a solid base of business across many aspects of the Agri-food industry.

Total farm cash receipts for the County of Middlesex in 2013 were \$659.1 million. The greatest contributor was corn production at \$124.4 million representing 21% of the total cash receipts. Soybeans rank second, ahead of hogs, dairy and poultry. These numbers show that the County is centered on cash crop production of corn and soybeans and production of hogs and poultry. The

total cash receipts for these four main commodities represent almost 60% of the value of agricultural production in the County of Middlesex. Including the strong dairy sector raises the percentage to 72% for the top 5 commodities produced.

Key Findings

- Land Base for North Middlesex
 - Total Area (km²) : 597.90
 - Total Area (acres): 147,744.10
 - Percent of County Total: 21.2%
- Top 3 Crop Production In North Middlesex
 - Corn
 - Soybean
 - Winter Wheat
- Livestock Production in North Middlesex
 - Pigs: 103,326 (35% of County)
 - Dairy Cattle: 1,675 (14% of County)
 - Broilers, Roasters and Cornish (Poultry): 212,703 (14% of County)
 - Steers: 5,006 (60% of County)

10.2.10 Middlesex County Report on Tourism, June 2009

The Community Futures Development Corporation of Middlesex County, in collaboration with Middlesex County, undertook a report on tourism development in 2009. This report provided strategic directions for enhancing tourism in the area and made the following recommendations for tourism development in Middlesex County:

- Determine who will accept the responsibility to move forward and take the lead role in establishing Middlesex County as a tourism destination
- Meet with stakeholders, service providers and operators in their municipality to provide updated information regarding the outcomes of the Tourism Report for Middlesex County, with a focus on the comprehensive plan for tourism
- Determine and seek out any potential partnerships that would help formulate a formal plan for Tourism in Middlesex County

- Prepare a business plan regarding the feasibility of establishing a Tourism Association in Middlesex County
- Establish a formal framework that will work with stakeholders, service providers, organizations, local service groups, business owners to promote and market Middlesex County as a tourism destination
- Provide information sessions, workshops and seminars for stakeholders, regarding improving tourism opportunities, their business and the local economy
- Develop and implement a marketing strategy to promote Tourism in Middlesex County
- Develop a Marketing campaign focusing on the “visiting friends and family” concept
- Consideration should be given to utilizing the Heritage Trail as a catalyst to developing a heritage/cultural tourism alliance with all of the municipalities. Building on the Middlesex Heritage Trail throughout the County would be an ideal vehicle to promote tourism in each municipality. There is potential for a visitors map to include the Heritage Trail Signs while promoting each part of the county, including, shopping dining, etc. In addition, some communities who have indicated an interest in erecting more signs, therefore it is recommended that additional signs be added to the existing Middlesex Heritage Trail

Specifically, the report calls on the County to focus on developing the following existing tourism sectors:

- Culture/Heritage
- Agri-Tourism
- Eco-Tourism
- Authentic towns and Villages

As well, the report examines two untapped tourism assets in Middlesex County:

- Sports Tourism
- The Rubber Tire Market (Self-drive tourism ,also known as rubber tire traffic)

10.2.11 Integrated Community Sustainable Plan for the Municipality of North Middlesex, April 2014

The Integrated Community Sustainable Plan (ICSP) for North Middlesex was developed in 2014 and serves as a blue-print that will help the municipality focus on ensuring that their community grows and prospers in a sustainable way. The implementation of the ICSP will intentionally complement the intent and mission of the Municipality’s Official and Strategic Plans.

The ICSP ensures that the Municipality of North Middlesex is committed to the sustainable development of its community through the following objectives:

- Ensure that all projects undertaken in the community contribute to the achievement of a truly sustainable community
- Ensure that the community will continue to achieve sustainability in the five sectors as identified by FCM
- Establish and use the range of metrics necessary to measure progress made towards achieving sustainability across all sectors of the community's activities

Key Findings

The ICSP for the Municipality of North Middlesex is driven by four pillars of sustainability which provides direction of the areas of sustainable development that require the Municipality's attention: Cultural, Economic, Environmental, and Social.

Economic Pillar of Sustainability

The North Middlesex municipality is primarily an agricultural-based sector being comprised of both large and small farm enterprises. Nonetheless there is the small-scale commercial within the local towns offering products and services to the local, regional and tourist community.

The following are strategies for the economic sustainability of North Middlesex:

- Developing Infrastructure
- Developing an Enhanced Tourism Sector
- Agri-Tourism
- Attraction of Sustainable Tier-One or Tier-Two Heavy Industrial Industries
- Community and Ward Economic Development
- Transportation Infrastructure
- Land Use Planning

Possible sustainable opportunities for the Agricultural Sector of the Community of North Middlesex are depicted below. The Municipality of North Middlesex views these types of activity as sustainable in nature and much needed for economic development stimulus. The examples are as follows:

- Fibre Flax Scutching Mill
- Hazelnuts
- Woodlot Management

- Biomass
- Organic Farming
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points
- Regional Cycling Activities
- Expanded Activities at the Parkhill Recreation Centre
- Farmers' Markets
- Sustainable Future of the Historic Carnegie Library
- Solar Initiatives

10.2.12 North Middlesex Community Profile, July 2015

The Municipality of North Middlesex is one of seven municipalities within Middlesex County. The largest land-based municipality, North Middlesex was formed through the amalgamation in 2011 of five (5) lower tier municipalities: Village of Ailsa Craig, Town of Parkhill, Town of McGillivray and the Townships of East and West Williams.

The Municipality of North Middlesex's mission is:

“Enhance agriculture and economic development while enriching community services, and conserving the natural environment and rich heritage of our community.”

Key Findings

- Population (2011): 6,660
- Median Household Income (2011): \$65,680
- Number of Households (2011): 2,345
- Land Area (2011): 597.90 km²
- Unemployment (2013): 5.8%
- University Educated (2011): 13.3%

The knowledge and understanding of social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts on a community can be obtained by establishing a baseline socioeconomic profile of the municipality. By establishing a baseline of economic and social data, municipalities can better plan and prepare strategic directions for future economic development. The North Middlesex Community Profile gives a socio-economic profile of North Middlesex and provides a statistical snapshot of the Municipality.

The North Middlesex Community Profile is the information booklet that the Municipality provides to interested parties, investment prospects, and those looking for socio-economic and community based data and information. This also includes top employers, business success stories, and data related to business and development costs.

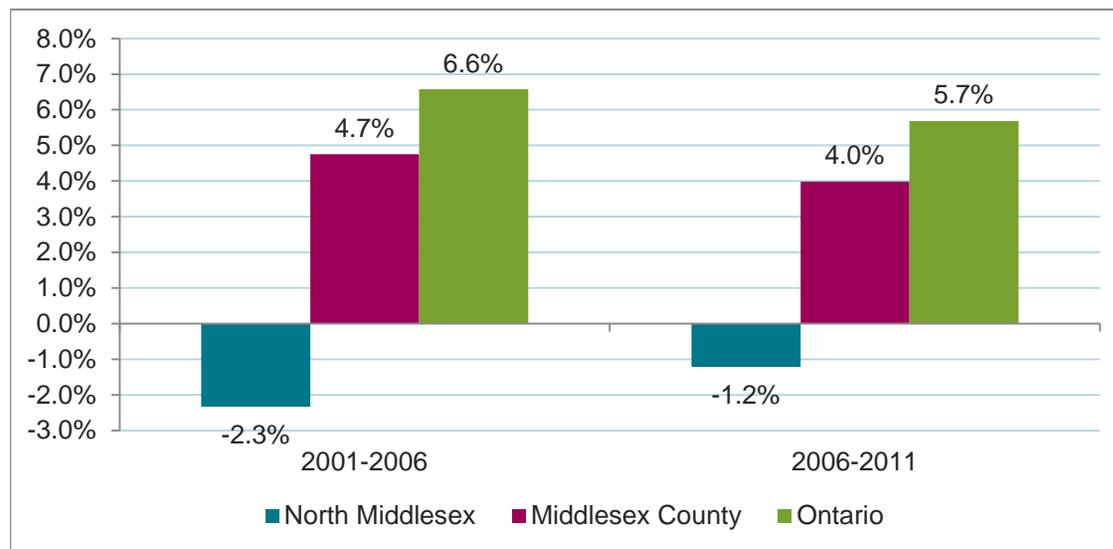
10.3 Demographic Characteristics

10.3.1 Population and Population Growth

In 2011, North Middlesex had a population of 6,658 which has been steadily declining since 2001. From 2001 to 2006 as shown in Figure 33, the municipality's population decreased by 2.3%, where from 2006 to 2011 a 1.2% decrease occurred. Middlesex County had a population of 439,151 in 2011 and has seen consistent increase in its population compared to North Middlesex. By comparison, from 2001 to 2006, the county's population increased by 4.7% and by 4.0% between 2006 and 2011.

Population growth in Ontario has been greater than both North Middlesex and Middlesex County, from 2001 to 2011. Ontario has seen increases in its population of 6.6% from 2001 to 2006 and 5.7% from 2006 to 2011. This trend of population increase is expected to continue for Middlesex County, as the Ontario Ministry of Finance has projected that the population by 2041 will be approximately 578,327.²⁴ From 2011 to 2041, Middlesex County is projected to increase its population by 31.7%, where Ontario is projected to grow by the same amount.²⁵

FIGURE 33 POPULATION GROWTH



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 Census Profiles, 2006 Community Profiles.

²⁴ Ontario Ministry of Finance. Southwestern Ontario and its census divisions, population by five-year age group, 2013–2041

²⁵ Ontario Ministry of Finance. Ontario Population Projections, 2013–2041

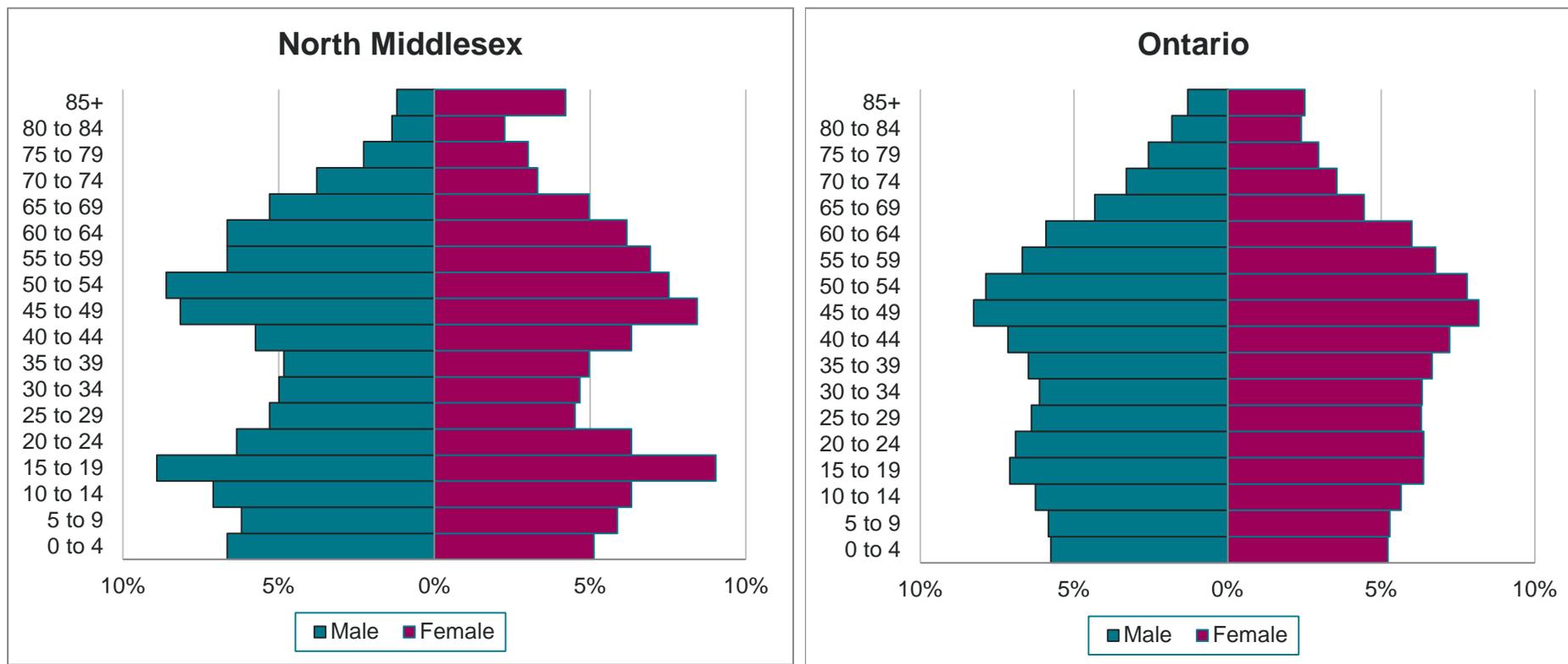


10.3.2 Population by Age Structure

The demographic structure in North Middlesex and Ontario displays signs of an aging population, with North Middlesex experiencing similar increases in its median age when compared to Ontario. From 2006 to 2011, the median age in North Middlesex increased slightly from 39.8 to 41.4. While during the same time period Ontario's median age increase from 39.0 to 40.4, illustrating the aging populations of in both North Middlesex and Ontario.

The population pyramid, shown in Figure 34, highlights that North Middlesex has a higher percentage of baby boomers than the province, as well as a lower percentage of population aged 39 and under.

FIGURE 34 POPULATION PYRAMID FOR NORTH MIDDLESEX AND ONTARIO, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 Census Profiles, Adapted by MDB Insight.



However, there is the exception of the 15 to 19 age group which accounts for 9% of North Middlesex’s total population. This data suggests that North Middlesex has difficulty in attracting and retaining young adults (20 to 30 year olds) as they may be moving to larger urban centres in search of employment or education.

10.3.3 Household Size

The household size data shows that North Middlesex has had a larger family size than Middlesex County and Ontario. Like its population however, the household size in North Middlesex has been declining.

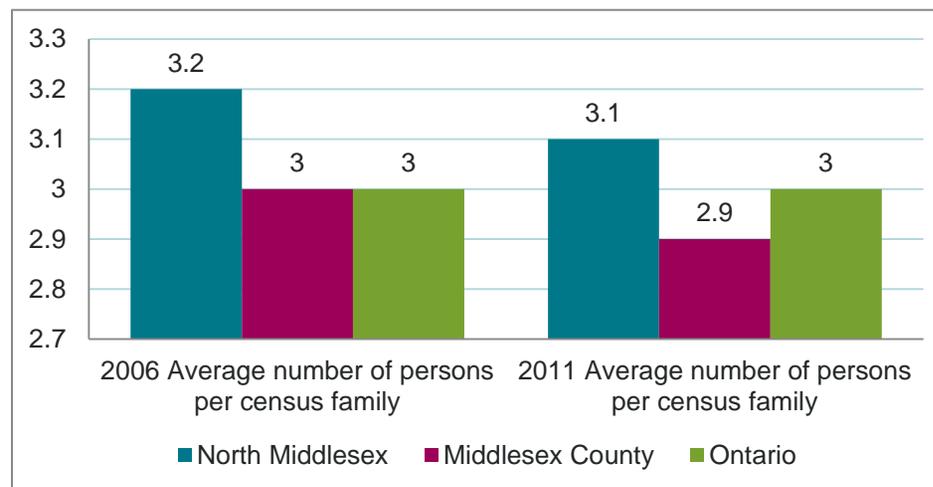
As shown in Figure 35, the household size from 2006 to 2011 declined from 3.2 to 3.1 in North Middlesex, while Middlesex County declined from 3 to 2.9 and Ontario remained stable at 3 over the same time period. Although North Middlesex has a slightly larger average of person per census family, it has declined at the same rate as Middlesex County.

10.3.4 Household Income and Dwelling Value

In 2011, as shown in Figure 36, North Middlesex's median income was \$65,680 which was slightly lower than Ontario (\$66,358), but much higher than Middlesex County (\$57,987). However, North Middlesex has experienced that lowest growth rate in median household income from 2006 to 2011 at 4.3%, when compared to Middlesex County (4.6%) and Ontario (9.8%) over the same time period.

Figure 37 shows that in 2011, North Middlesex's average value of dwellings was \$275,725 which was slighter higher than Middlesex County (\$261,355) and significantly lower than Ontario (\$367,428). Similar to median income, North Middlesex experienced the lowest growth rate in average value of dwellings at 17.5%, when compared to Middlesex County (19.7%) and Ontario (23.5%) over the same time period.

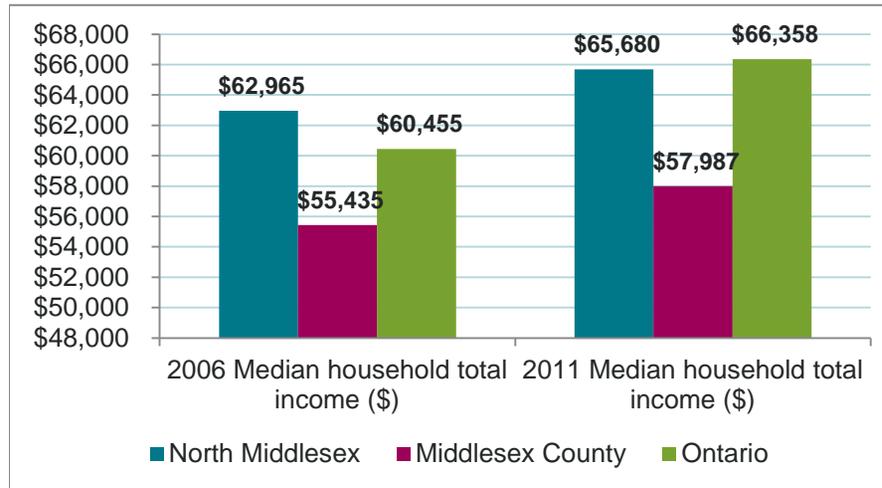
FIGURE 35 AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER CENSUS FAMILY IN NORTH MIDDLESEX, MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND ONTARIO, 2006-2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 Census Profiles, 2006 Community Profiles

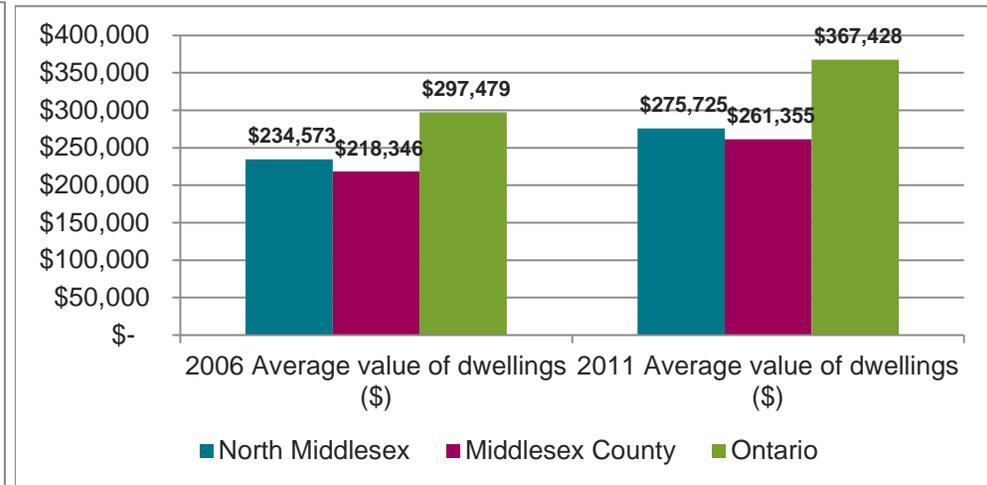


FIGURE 36 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES, 2006 & 2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, 2006 Community Profiles

FIGURE 37 AVERAGE VALUE OF DWELLINGS, 2006 & 2011



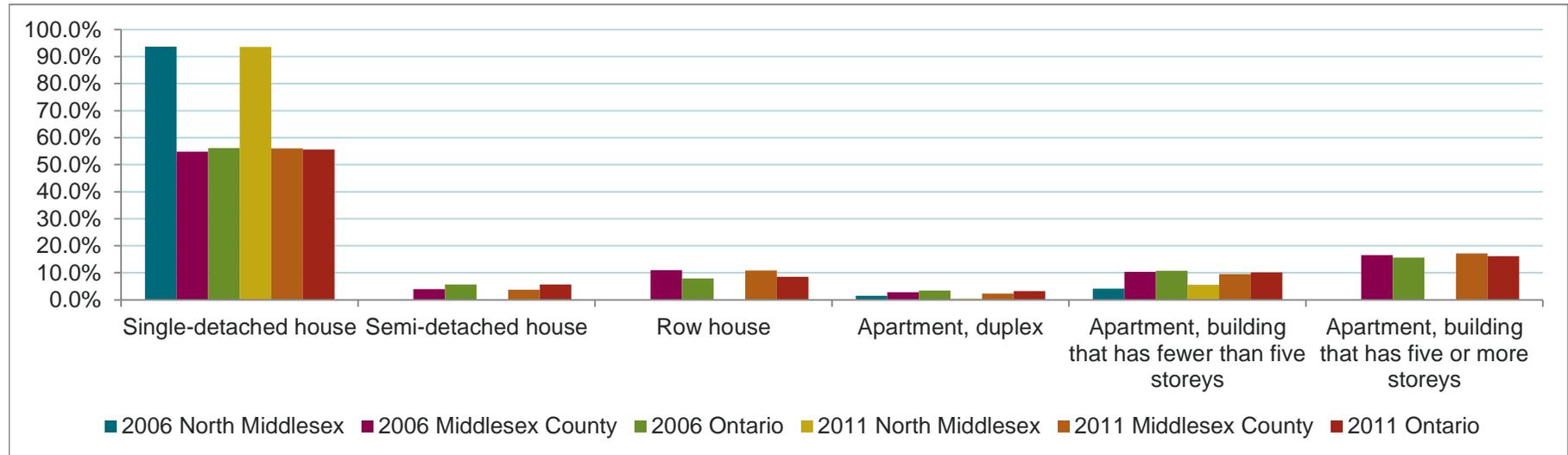
Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, 2006 Community Profiles

10.3.5 Dwelling Characteristics

Figure 38 shows that in 2011, North Middlesex had an overwhelming majority of its dwellings (93.6%) categorized as single-detached homes. This is in stark contrast to Middlesex County which had 56% of its dwellings categorized as single-detached homes, and Ontario which had 55.6% of its housing stock as single-detached homes. Interestingly, Middlesex County is the only one to see increases in single-detached homes from 54.8% in 2006 to 56% in 2011. On the other hand, North Middlesex and Ontario have seen very small declines in single-detached homes. Where single-detached homes have declined from 93.7% in 2006 to 93.6% in 2011 for North Middlesex and 56.1% in 2006 to 55.6% in 2011 for Ontario



FIGURE 38 DWELLING TYPES IN NORTH MIDDLESEX, MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND ONTARIO, 2006 & 2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 Census Profiles, 2006 Community Profiles

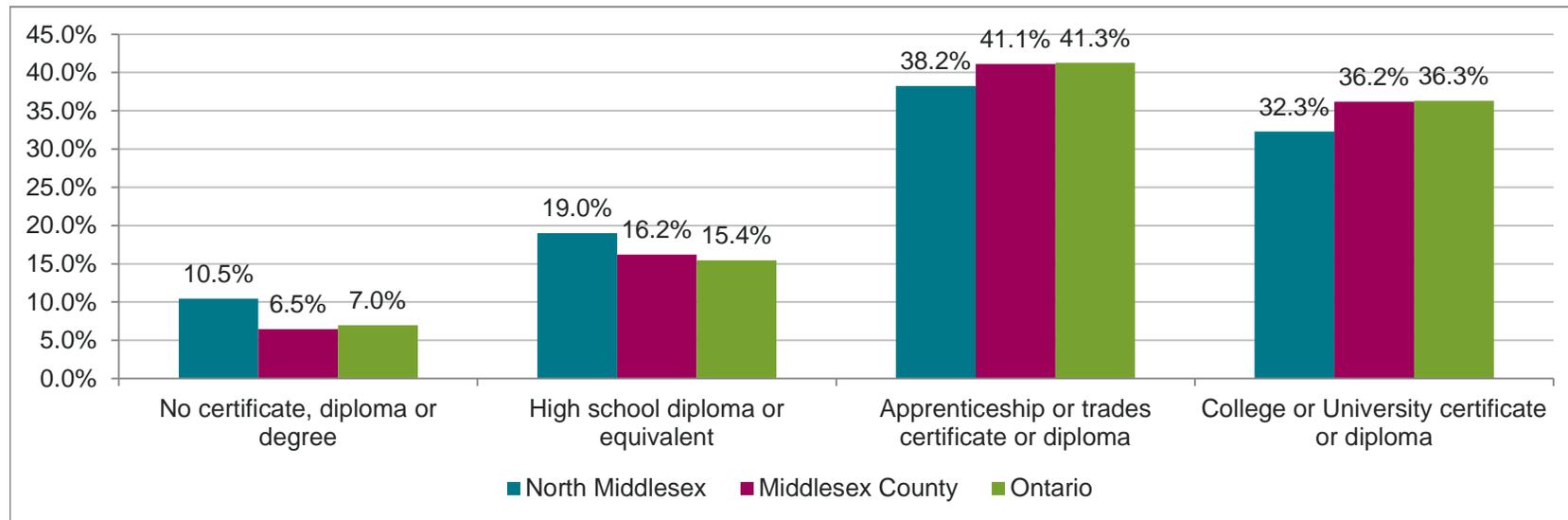
10.3.6 Educational Profile

An educational profile is an important socio-economic indicator as it reveals the community’s ability to staff new and existing business and industries. Figure 39 illustrates that in 2011, North Middlesex had a lower portion of its population aged 25 to 64 (32.3%) that had a College or University certificate or diploma when compared to both Middlesex County (36.2%) and Ontario (36.3%). As well, North Middlesex had a lower portion of its population aged 25-64 (38.2%) that had an Apprenticeship or trades certificate of diploma when compared to both Middlesex County (41.1%) and Ontario (41.3%).

As a result, North Middlesex had a higher portion of its population aged 25 to 64 (19%) that had a high school diploma or equivalent and a higher portion of individuals who have no certificate, diploma, or degree (10.5%). A potential area of concern is that in 2011, North Middlesex had a population where, between the ages of 25 to 64, 29.5% had at most a high school diploma or equivalent which is higher than both Middlesex County (22.7%) and Ontario (22.4%).



FIGURE 39 POPULATION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, AGED 25 TO 64 IN NORTH MIDDLESEX, MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND ONTARIO, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey

Education by major field of study was also examined to gain a better understanding of the local composition of the total labour force in relation to the County and Province. In the 25 to 44 age group, North Middlesex’s largest portion of the total labour force (28.8%) studied “Health and related fields”. While for the 45 to 64 age group, the largest portion of North Middlesex’s total labour force (27.3%) also studied “Health and related fields”. In the case of those who studied “business, management, and public administration”, North Middlesex had a higher proportion of its total labour force in the 25 to 44 age group (23.9%) compared to Middlesex County (18.8%) and Ontario (22%) within the same age group. This is in contrast to the 45 to 64 age group in North Middlesex that studied “business, management, and public administration” which was 17.2% of the total labour force compared to Middlesex County (20%) and Ontario (21.9%).

In the case of those that studied “architecture, engineering, and related technologies”, North Middlesex had a higher or the relatively the same portion of its total labour force in both the 25 to 44 age group (16.6%) compared to Middlesex County (15.6%) and Ontario (16.8%) and the 45 to 64 age group (23.4%) compared to Middlesex County (20.5%) and Ontario (22.7%). Also of note, is that North Middlesex had a much higher portion of its total labour force that studied “Agriculture, natural resources and conservation” in the 25 to 44 age group (8.6%) and 45 to 64 age group (7.7%) when compared to both the County and Province.



10.4 Occupational Profile

10.4.1 Trends in Local Occupations and Employment

North Middlesex's total labour force in 2011 was 5,190, which was a 0.7% increase from 2006. This is similar, at a much lower rate, to the total labour force increases in Middlesex County (4.9%) and Ontario (6.7%). The municipality's unemployment rate in 2011 was 4.2% which was much lower than both Middlesex County (8.5%) and Ontario (8.3%).

10.4.1.1 Labour Force by Sector Category

Labour force by sector category for all three geographic areas was examined to determine how North Middlesex's labour force compared to Middlesex County and Ontario. [Figure 40](#) below, shows the leading sectors of employment in 2011 for North Middlesex's labour force which were:

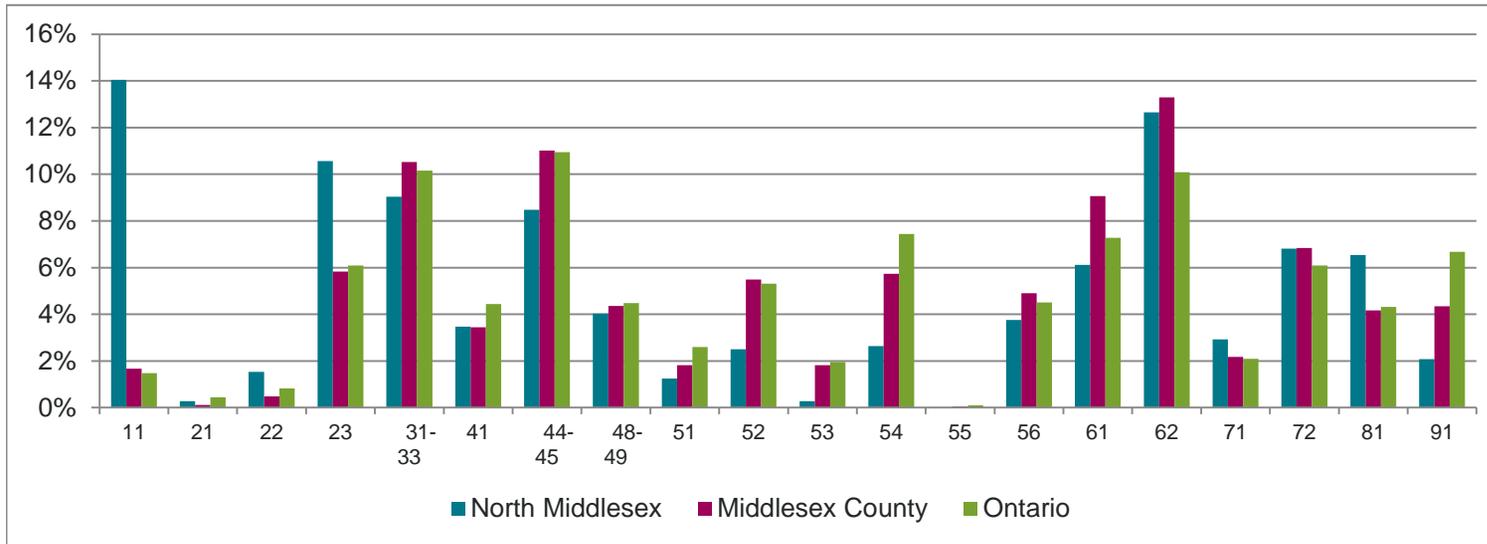
- 11-Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting (14.0%)
- 62-Health care and social assistance (12.7%)
- 23-Construction (10.6%)
- 31-33 Manufacturing (9.0%)
- 44-45 Retail trade (8.5%)

Of the above sectors; agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (14%) and construction (10.6%) both had significantly higher concentrations of employment relative to both Middlesex County (1.7% and 5.8% respectively) and Ontario (1.5% and 6.1 respectively).

North Middlesex also has a significantly lower concentration of employment relative to Middlesex County and Ontario:

- 54-Professional; scientific and technical services (2.6% vs. 5.7% and 7.4% respectively)
- 91-Public administration (2.1% vs. 4.3% and 6.7% respectively)

FIGURE 40 CLASS OF WORKER BY INDUSTRY AND PERCENT COMPOSITION, EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE AGED 15 AND OVER, 2011



NAIC Categories: 11-Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting, 21-Mining; quarrying; and oil and gas extraction, 22-Utilities, 23-Construction, 31-33 Manufacturing, 41-Wholesale trade, 44-45 Retail trade, 48-49 Transportation and warehousing, 51-Information and cultural industries, 52-Finance and insurance, 53-Real estate and rental and leasing, 54-Professional; scientific and technical services, 55-Management of companies and enterprises, 56-Administrative and support; waste management and remediation services, 61-Educational services, 62-Health care and social assistance, 71-Arts; entertainment and recreation, 72-Accommodation and food services, 81-Other services (except public administration), 91-Public administration

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey (NHS) Profile, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE

As Figure 41 below illustrates, North Middlesex's labour force has experienced some changes in its industry composition as an overall 280 individuals were removed from North Middlesex's labour force. North Middlesex experienced decline in several industry sector, with the largest decline of workers in the following sectors:

- 11-Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting (215 fewer workers)
- 31-33-Manufacturing (70 fewer workers)
- 41-Wholesale Trade (65 fewer workers)

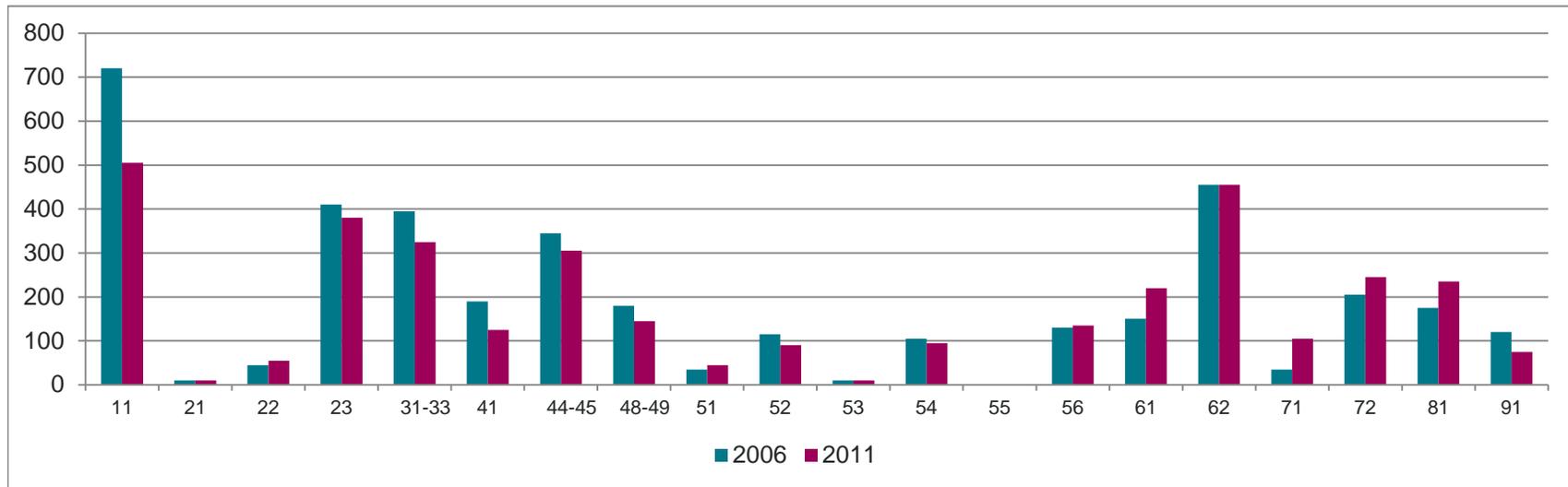
As well, North Middlesex experienced growth in a few sectors from 2006 to 2011 where the following industry sectors saw growth:

- 61-Educational services (70 more workers)



- 71-Arts; entertainment and recreation (70 more workers)

FIGURE 41 CLASS OF WORKER BY INDUSTRY, NORTH MIDDLESEX, EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE AGED 15 AND OVER, 2006 & 2011



NAIC Categories: 11-Agriculture; forestry; fishing and hunting, 21-Mining; quarrying; and oil and gas extraction, 22-Utilities, 23-Construction, 31-33 Manufacturing, 41-Wholesale trade, 44-45 Retail trade, 48-49 Transportation and warehousing, 51-Information and cultural industries, 52-Finance and insurance, 53-Real estate and rental and leasing, 54-Professional; scientific and technical services, 55-Management of companies and enterprises, 56-Administrative and support; waste management and remediation services, 61-Educational services, 62-Health care and social assistance, 71-Arts; entertainment and recreation, 72-Accommodation and food services, 81-Other services (except public administration), 91-Public administration

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey (NHS) Profile, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE, and 2006 Community Profiles, 2006 Census, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE

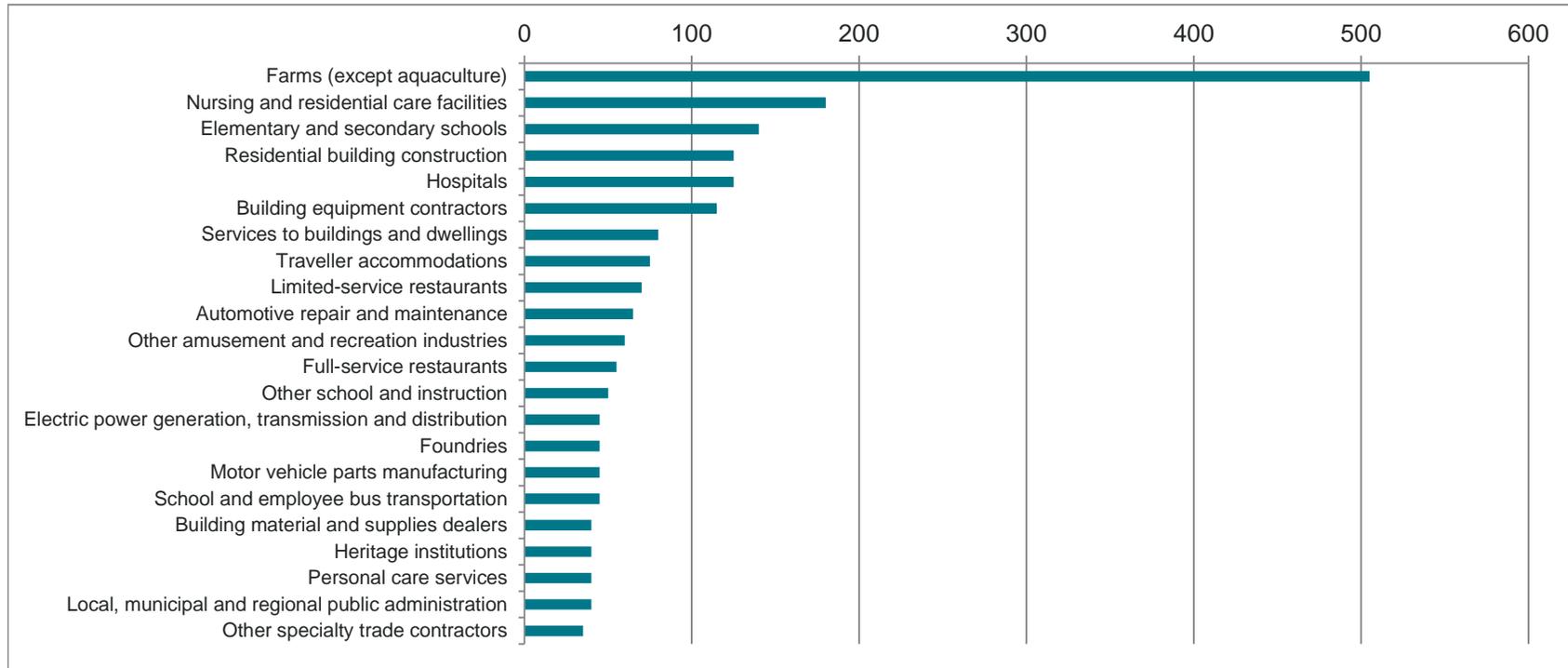
Figure 42 highlights the top 22 sub-sectors in North Middlesex in terms of employed labour force. As of 2011, farms (except aquaculture) and nursing and residential care facilities represented the top two sub-sectors in terms of employment, employing 505 and 180 people respectively. It should be noted that of the top 22 sub-sectors in North Middlesex, six sub-sectors employed 100 or more workers. As well of the top 22 sub-sectors, six were related to construction and building industries.

The top industry employment in North Middlesex in 2011 was

- Farms (except aquaculture) – 505 people employed
- Nursing and residential care facilities – 180 people employed
- Elementary and secondary schools – 140 people employed

- Residential building construction – 125 people employed
- Hospitals – 125 people employed

FIGURE 42 TOP INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYED, NORTH MIDDLESEX, 2011

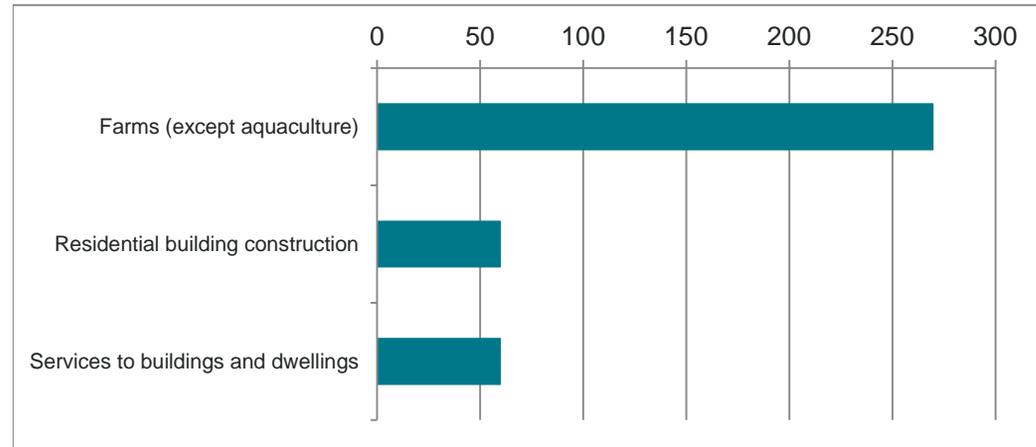


Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 99-012-x2011034



Figure 43 below, shows the only 3 industrial sub-sectors for North Middlesex in terms of self-employment. Only three sub-sectors are displayed as there was zero self-employed in the other sub-sectors in North Middlesex. As a rural community, it is no surprise that the sub-sector of “farms (except aquaculture)” comprises the largest amount of self-employed workers in North Middlesex at 270 workers. While the only other two sub-sectors that had self-employed workers, “residential building construction” and “services to buildings and dwellings”, both had 60 self-employed individuals.

FIGURE 43 TOP INDUSTRIES FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYED, NORTH MIDDLESEX, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 99-012x2011034

10.4.1.2 Labour Force by Occupational Classification

Examining a community’s labour force by occupational category provides a unique insight into North Middlesex’s labour force composition. Figure 44 shows that the largest occupational category in North Middlesex for 2011, as measured by employed workers over the age of 15, was:

- Sales, services occupations – 840 people
- Trades; transport and equipment operators and related occupations – 680 people
- Management occupations – 680 people

From 2006 to 2011, North Middlesex saw an overall decrease in its labour force by occupation of 6.4%. North Middlesex saw the following increases in employment by occupation type from 2006 to 2011:

- Occupations in art; culture; recreation and sport (+287.5%)
- Management occupations (+177.6%)
- Occupations in education; law and social; community and government services (+62.9%)
- Sales and service occupations (+31.3%)



While the largest decreases in employment by occupation type in North Middlesex from 2006 to 2011 were:

- Natural resources; agriculture and related production occupations (-72.0%)
- Business; finance and administration occupations (-52.1%)
- Occupations in manufacturing and utilities (-44.4%)

FIGURE 44 EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE BY OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION, NORTH MIDDLESEX, 2006 & 2011

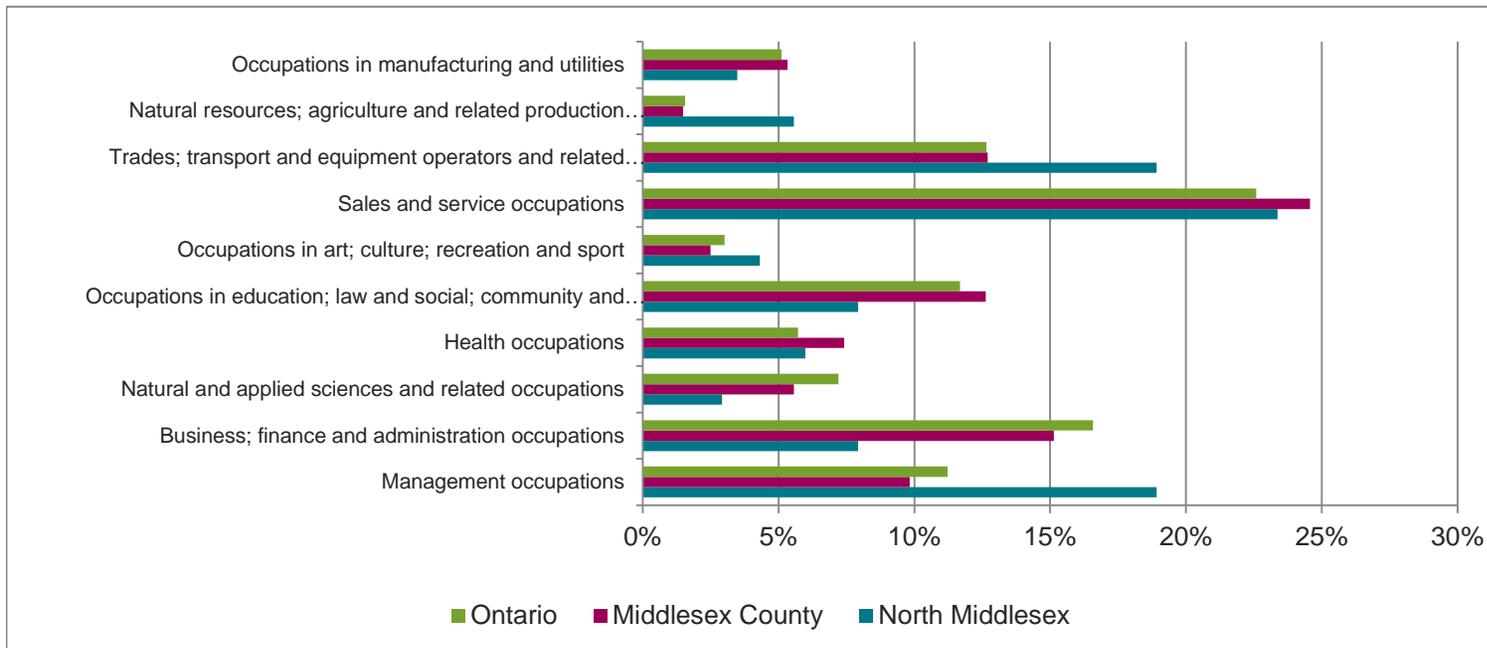
Occupational Category	2006	2006 % of Total	2011	2011 % of Total	% Change from 2006-2011
0 Management occupations	245	6.4%	680	18.9%	177.6%
1 Business; finance and administration occupations	595	15.5%	285	7.9%	-52.1%
2 Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	125	3.3%	105	2.9%	-16.0%
3 Health occupations	275	7.2%	215	6.0%	-21.8%
4 Occupations in education; law and social; community and government services	175	4.6%	285	7.9%	62.9%
5 Occupations in art; culture; recreation and sport	40	1.0%	155	4.3%	287.5%
6 Sales and service occupations	640	16.7%	840	23.4%	31.3%
7 Trades; transport and equipment operators and related occupations	800	20.8%	680	18.9%	-15.0%
8 Natural resources; agriculture and related production occupations	715	18.6%	200	5.6%	-72.0%
9 Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	225	5.9%	125	3.5%	-44.4%
Total	3,840	100%	3,595	100%	-6.4%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, 2006 Community Profiles



Figure 45 illustrates the concentrations of the employed labour force by occupational classification in North Middlesex, when compared to Middlesex County and Ontario.

FIGURE 45 EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE BY OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey (NHS) Profile, 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE

In 2011, North Middlesex had a significantly higher concentration of its employed labour force in the following occupations relative to Middlesex County and Ontario:

- Management occupations (18.9% vs. 9.8% and 11.2% respectively)
- Trades; transport and equipment operators and related occupations (18.9% vs. 12.7% and 12.7% respectively)
- Natural resources; agriculture and related production occupations (5.6% vs. 1.5% and 1.6% respectively)

In 2011, North Middlesex had a significantly lower concentration of its employed labour force in the following occupations relative to Middlesex County and Ontario:

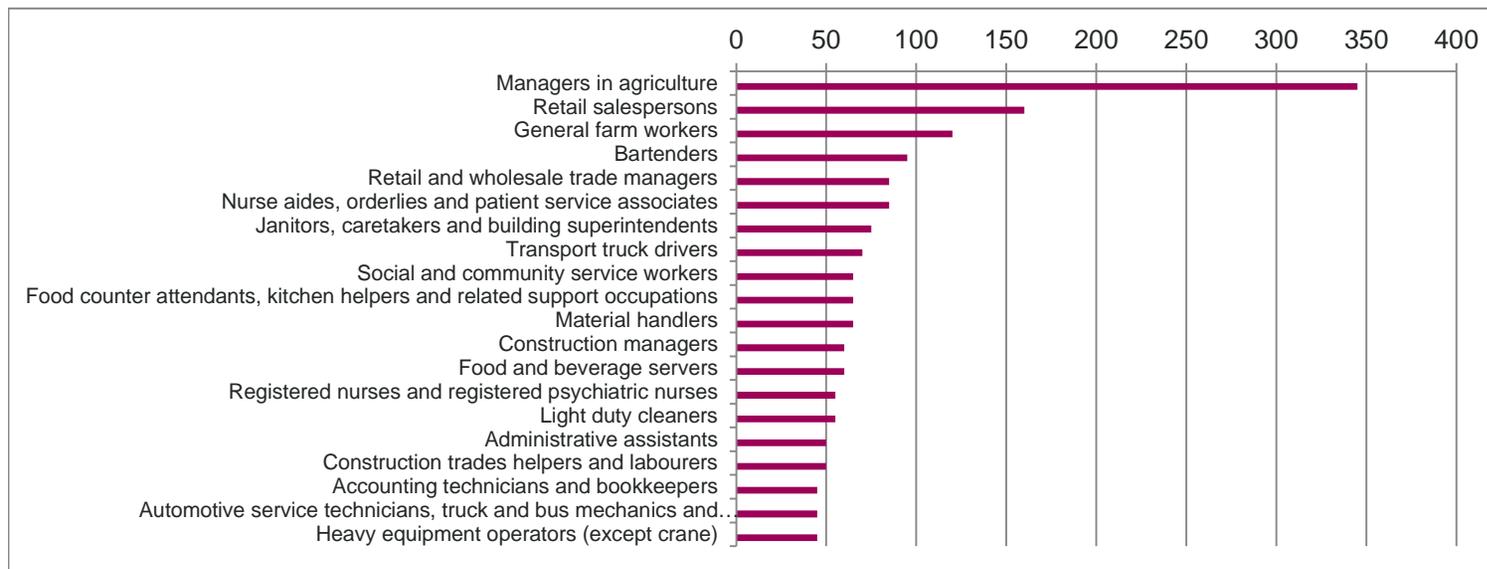


- Business; finance and administration occupations (7.9% vs. 15.1% and 16.6% respectively)

Figure 14 provides a snapshot of the top 15 occupational sub-categories in North Middlesex in 2011, where the top two occupations by number of employed workers were “managers in agriculture” (345) and “retail salespersons” (160). The next top four occupations by sub-category in North Middlesex are:

- General farm workers – 120 people employed
- Bartenders – 95 people employed
- Retail and wholesale trade managers – 85 people employed
- Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates – 85 people employed

FIGURE 46 TOP OCCUPATIONS BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYED, NORTH MIDDLESEX, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey, Catalogue Number 99-012-x2011051

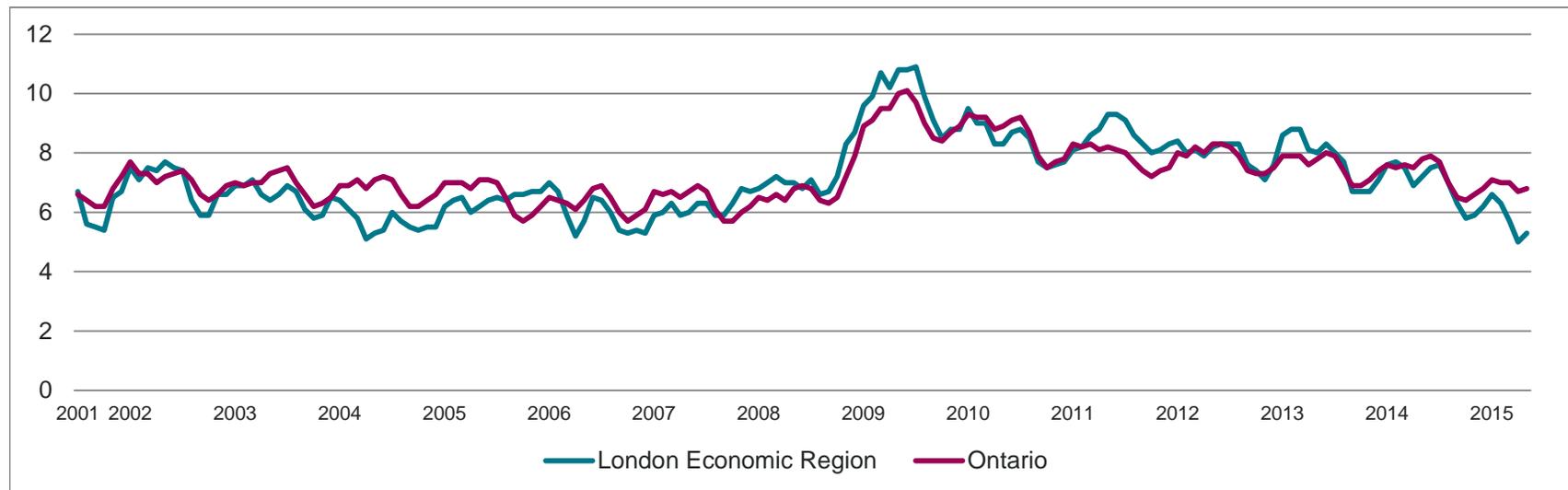


10.4.1.3 Annual Unemployment Rate

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, North Middlesex’s unemployment rate was 4.2% which was much lower than both Middlesex County (8.5%) and Ontario (8.3%). Annual unemployment statistics were examined to determine long term trends and the data was made available for economic regions from Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey. An economic region is composed of several census divisions that are grouped with other regions that have similar economic characteristics. For the purposes of the comparison, the economic region of London was used as North Middlesex lies within this region.

Figure 47 displays the annual unemployment rates for the London Economic Region and Ontario from 2001 to 2015. The figure shows that from 2011 to 2015 the unemployment rate for the London economic region paralleled the provincial trend; however, the unemployment rate for the region was consistently lower than the province before 2008, and was consistently higher than the province following 2008 until recently in 2015. Based on the figure below, the London economic region was hit harder than the province following the 2008 global recession and only just recently in 2015 has the regions unemployment fallen below the provincial average.

FIGURE 47 AVERAGE MONTHLY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR THE ECONOMIC REGION OF LONDON AND ONTARIO, 2001 – 2015



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 282-0122 - Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by provinces and economic regions based on 2011 Census boundaries, 3-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality, monthly (persons unless otherwise noted), CANSIM (database).



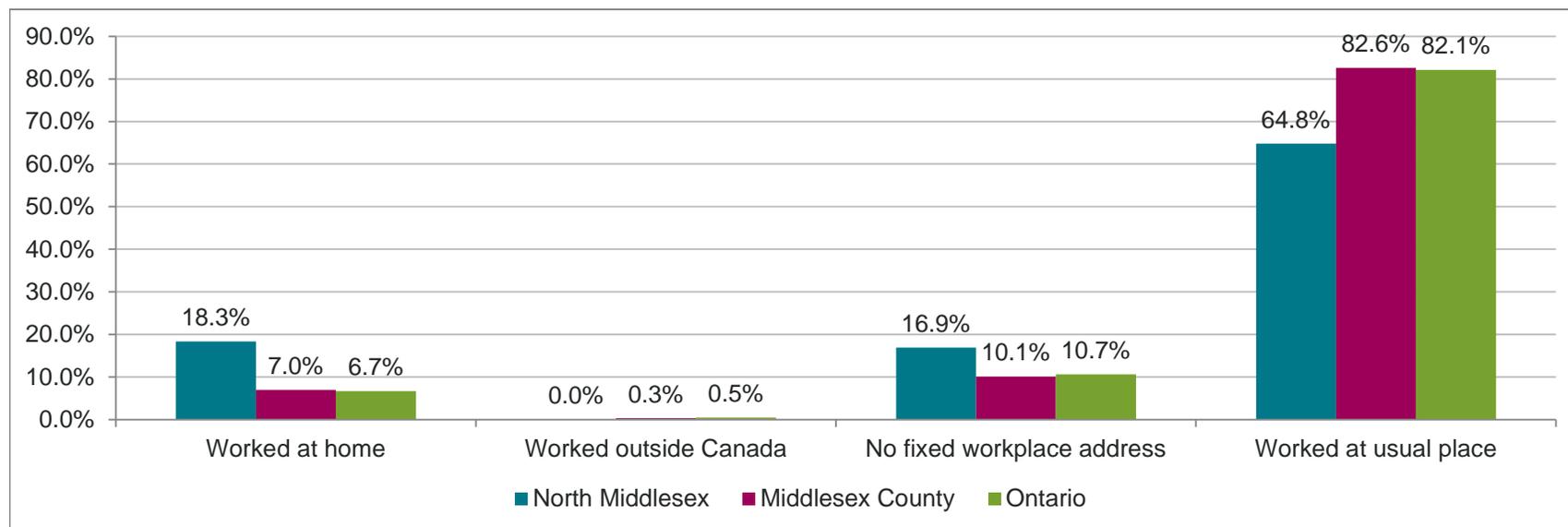
10.4.2 Labour Flow Characteristics

10.4.2.1 Place of Work Status

Figure 48 displays the proportion of the total employed labour force aged 15 years and over by place of work status for North Middlesex, Middlesex County and Ontario in 2011. Only 64.8% of the employed labour force in North Middlesex worked at usual place, which is significantly lower than Middlesex County (82.6%) and Ontario (82.1%). North Middlesex has a higher proportion of its employed labour force that has no fixed workplace or address (16.9%) when compared to both the County (10.1%) and Ontario (10.7%). However, North Middlesex had no one in its employed labour force that worked outside of Canada.

Of note, North Middlesex has a significantly higher proportion of its employed labour force that worked from home (18.3%) when compared to Middlesex County (7.0%) and Ontario (6.7%). This may be in part due to the high concentration of workers who are employed in agriculture and agricultural related business, compared to the county and province.

FIGURE 48 PLACE OF WORK STATUS IN NORTH MIDDLESEX, MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND ONTARIO, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey

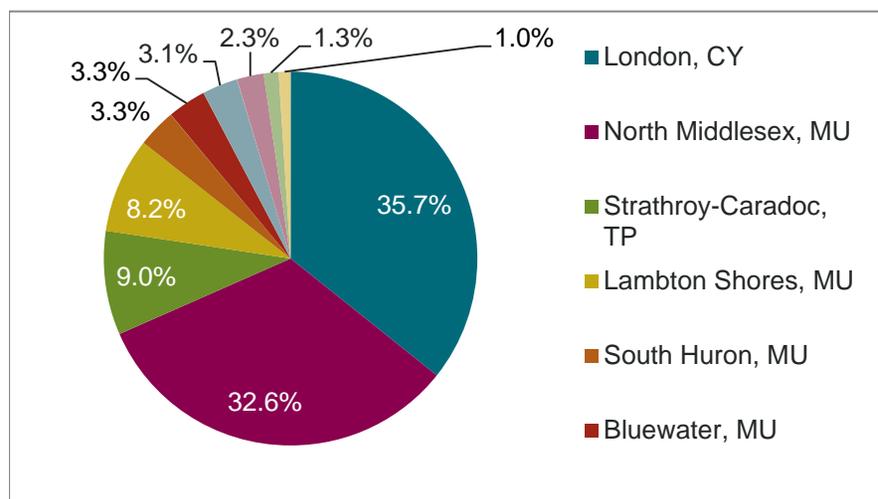
10.4.2.2 Commuting Patterns

The following two figures display the commuting patterns for the labour force that resides in North Middlesex, as well as for the labour force that works in the municipality.

Figure 49 highlights the top ten locations where North Middlesex residents commute to for work. The top location where North Middlesex residents commute to work is split almost evenly between London (35.7%) and North Middlesex (32.6%). Over two thirds of North Middlesex residents commute to London or North Middlesex for work while Strathroy-Caradoc (9.0%) and Lambton Shores (8.2%) are the next locations with the highest amount of commuting North Middlesex residents. In total, Middlesex County accounted for over 84.1% of the top ten locations that North Middlesex residents commute to work.

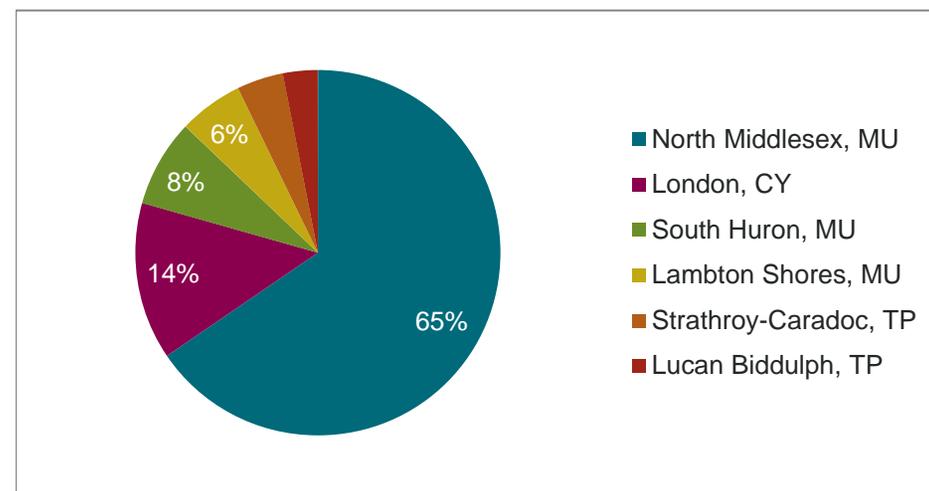
Figure 50, illustrates the commuting patterns of those where North Middlesex is their place of work. In the case of North Middlesex, 65% of those that worked in North Middlesex also lived there. Also of those working in North Middlesex, 14% lived in London, 8% lived in South Huron and 6% lived in Lambton Shores. Overall, an overwhelming majority of those that worked in North Middlesex, lived within Middlesex County.

FIGURE 49 TOP 10 LOCATIONS RESIDENTS OF NORTH MIDDLESEX COMMUTE TO FOR THEIR USUAL PLACE OF WORK, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada - 2011 National Household Survey. Catalogue Number 99-012-X2011032.

FIGURE 50 TOP 6 LOCATIONS WORKERS FROM NORTH MIDDLESEX COMMUTE FROM, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada - 2011 National Household Survey. Catalogue Number 99-012-X2011032.



10.4.2.3 Mobility Status

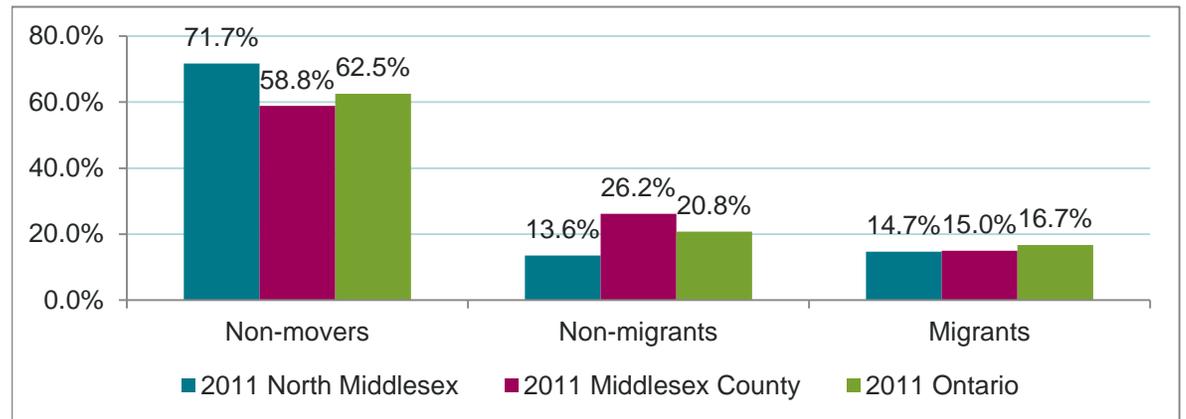
The mobility status in 2011 for North Middlesex was examined in order to determine the level of new residents North Middlesex was attracting in comparison to Middlesex County and Ontario.

Figure 51 shows the proportion of non-movers who are people who have not moved since the last census, non-migrants who are people that have moved but remained in the same municipality, and migrants who have moved to a different municipality within Canada.

In 2011, North Middlesex had a higher proportion of non-movers (71.7%) when compared to Middlesex County (58.8%) and Ontario (62.5%).

As well, North Middlesex had a lower proportion of non-migrants (13.6%) when compared to Middlesex County (26.2%) and Ontario (20.8%). It is interesting to note that over 25% of individuals in Middlesex County are non-migrants, indicating the internal migration that was ongoing within the County. The high proportion of non-movers combined with a lower proportion of migrants (14.7%) when compared to Middlesex County (15.0%) and Ontario (16.7%), may suggest that North Middlesex is having more difficulty in attracting new residents from outside the county to the municipality.

FIGURE 51 MOBILITY STATUS FOR NORTH MIDDLESEX, MIDDLESEX COUNTY AND ONTARIO, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada. 2011 National Household Survey

10.5 Business Patterns Assessment

Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Patterns Data provides a record of business establishments by industry and size. This data is collected from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The business data collected for North Middlesex includes all local businesses that meet at least one of the three following criteria:

- Have an employee workforce for which they submit payroll remittances to CRA; or
- Have a minimum of \$30,000 in annual sales revenue; or
- Are incorporated under a federal or provincial act and have filed a federal corporate income tax form within the past three years.



The Canadian Business Patterns Data records business counts by “Total”, “Indeterminate” and “Subtotal” categories. The establishments in the “Indeterminate” category include the self-employed (i.e. those who do not maintain an employee payroll, but may have a workforce consisting of contracted workers, family members or business owners). It should be noted that the Canadian Business Patterns Data uses the CRA as a primary resource in establishment counts; therefore, businesses without a business number or indicating annual sales less than \$30,000 are not included. The population of these small, unincorporated businesses is thought to be in the range of 600,000 in all of Canada.

10.5.1 Key Business Characteristics

A detailed review of the business patterns data for the period between 2008 and 2013 for North Middlesex provides an understanding of the growth or decline of businesses over the five-year period and the key characteristics that define the township’s business community. When combined with the broader industry analysis, the business patterns information will assist in understanding the key industry opportunities for North Middlesex.

Understanding the trends in business growth in the community provides valuable insight into the shape that future growth and investment in North Middlesex might take. It also provides an indication of where the priorities of the municipality should lie, especially with regards to program development and delivery, and strategic planning.

In terms of concentration, the following sectors identified in [Figure 52](#) illustrate the highest proportion of businesses establishments in North Middlesex as of December 2013:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (354 businesses, 45.9% of total)
- Construction (78 businesses, 10.1% of total)
- Transportation and warehousing (45 businesses, 5.8% of total)
- Retail trade (43 businesses, 5.6% of total)
- Real estate and rental and leasing (42 businesses, 5.4% of total)

Notably when the indeterminate category (self-employed) is removed, the sectors with the highest business establishments remain consistent with the sectors mentioned previously:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (47 businesses, 18.5% of total)
- Construction (43 businesses, 16.9% of total)
- Retail Trade (30 businesses, 11.8% of total)
- Transportation and warehousing (19 businesses, 7.5% of total)

FIGURE 52 NUMBER OF BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS BY INDUSTRY AND SIZE, NORTH MIDDLESEX, 2013

Industry (NAICS)	December 2013								
	Total	Indeterminate	Subtotal	1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100+
11 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	354	307	47	33	10	3	1	0	0
21 - Mining and oil and gas extraction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22 - Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23 - Construction	78	35	43	27	12	4	0	0	0
31-33 - Manufacturing	12	6	6	3	1	1	1	0	0
41 - Wholesale trade	16	6	10	6	2	2	0	0	0
44-45 - Retail trade	43	13	30	13	9	7	1	0	0
48-49 - Transportation and warehousing	45	26	19	13	3	1	2	0	0
51 - Information and cultural industries	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
52 - Finance and insurance	21	14	7	3	1	0	3	0	0
53 - Real estate and rental and leasing	42	37	5	3	2	0	0	0	0
54 - Professional, scientific and technical services	30	14	16	10	4	2	0	0	0
55 - Management of companies and enterprises	23	17	6	3	2	0	0	1	0
56 - Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	20	8	12	5	4	2	1	0	0
61 - Educational services	3	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
62 - Health care and social assistance	23	4	19	8	4	4	2	0	1
71 - Arts, entertainment and recreation	5	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
72 - Accommodation and food services	17	4	13	3	9	0	1	0	0
81 - Other services (except public administration)	37	21	16	11	5	0	0	0	0
91 - Public administration	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	771	517	254	144	68	27	13	1	1

Source: Statistics Canada. Canadian Business Patterns, December 2013

In 2013, a total of 771 business establishments were located in North Middlesex. Approximately 67% (or 517) of those businesses were self-employed. A further 27% of the businesses employed less than ten employees, highlighting the very important role small business plays in North Middlesex.



It is also important to note the scarcity of large firms in the municipality's economy. This is of interest because small, medium and large firms are generally believed to provide different economic functions within an economic region. Small firms are generally seen as the major source of new products and ideas, while large firms typically develop as products become more homogenous and firms begin to exploit economies of scale. The lack of large business in North Middlesex is concerning as these firms are typically more export oriented and generate higher operating surpluses. However being a small rural community may naturally limit the potential of attracting large-sized businesses and industry to the region.

It is also valuable to examine the growth in businesses by industry, so as to better understand areas of emerging opportunity and importance within North Middlesex's economy. [Figure 53](#) provides an indication of the growth in business establishments by two digit NAICS codes from 2008 to 2013.

The sectors that have experienced the highest rate of growth include:

- Real estate and rental and leasing (425.0%)
- Professional, scientific and technical services (233.3%)
- Construction (151.6%)
- Transportation and warehousing (136.8%)
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (81.5%)

Overall between 2008 and 2013, North Middlesex new business counts doubled (100.8%) adding 384 new businesses to the municipality. The overwhelming majority of these new businesses were self-employed workers, where the bulk of additions occurred in the "agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting" and "construction" sectors.

FIGURE 53 NUMBER OF BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS BY INDUSTRY, NORTH MIDDLESEX, 2008 & 2013²⁶

Industry (NAICS)	December 2008			December 2013			% Change		
	Total	Indeterminate	Subtotal	Total	Indeterminate	Subtotal	Total	Indeterminate	Subtotal
11 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	195	170	25	354	307	47	81.5%	80.6%	88.0%
21 - Mining and oil and gas extraction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
22 - Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
23 - Construction	31	11	20	78	35	43	151.6%	218.2%	115.0%
31-33 - Manufacturing	13	6	7	12	6	6	-7.7%	0.0%	-14.3%
41 - Wholesale trade	8	5	3	16	6	10	100.0%	20.0%	233.3%
44-45 - Retail trade	25	11	14	43	13	30	72.0%	18.2%	114.3%
48-49 - Transportation and warehousing	19	9	10	45	26	19	136.8%	188.9%	90.0%
51 - Information and cultural industries	3	2	1	1	1	0	-66.7%	-50.0%	-100.0%
52 - Finance and insurance	7	6	1	21	14	7	200.0%	133.3%	600.0%
53 - Real estate and rental and leasing	8	7	1	42	37	5	425.0%	428.6%	400.0%
54 - Professional, scientific and technical services	9	6	3	30	14	16	233.3%	133.3%	433.3%
55 - Management of companies and enterprises	8	5	3	23	17	6	187.5%	240.0%	100.0%
56 - Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	8	0	8	20	8	12	150.0%	0.0%	50.0%
61 - Educational services	3	2	1	3	1	2	0.0%	-50.0%	100.0%
62 - Health care and social assistance	10	3	7	23	4	19	130.0%	33.3%	171.4%
71 - Arts, entertainment and recreation	4	4	0	5	3	2	25.0%	-25.0%	0.0%
72 - Accommodation and food services	9	3	6	17	4	13	88.9%	33.3%	116.7%
81 - Other services (except public administration)	23	11	12	37	21	16	60.9%	90.9%	33.3%
91 - Public administration	1	0	1	2	0	1	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	384	261	123	771	517	254	100.8%	98.1%	106.5%

Source: Statistics Canada. Canadian Business Patterns, December 2008 and 2013

²⁶ Excludes a new NAICS (industry) category called "unclassified". This new category contains any businesses that satisfy conditions to be included but do not have a NAICS. Prior to December 2014 Statistics Canada did not include these. The counts of businesses without employees now cover all enterprises which meet one of the following criteria: is incorporated and/or shows a minimum of \$30,000 in revenue (non-taxable or taxable). This change affects businesses that did not have \$30,000 in taxable revenue in previous years but did have at least \$30,000 in overall (non-taxable and taxable) revenue. These businesses will now be included and represent approximately 600,000 units. Business counts in NAIC 53- Real Estate and rental and leasing and 62 – Health care and social assistance have the largest increases.



Based on location quotients Figure 54²⁷, in 2013 only two sectors showed a high local concentration of businesses in North Middlesex:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (LQ of 11.68)
- Public administration (LQ of 1.89)

Of these two sectors, both saw an increase in its local concentration of businesses from 2008-2013. Of note is the “agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting” industry sector, which saw business count increases in both its total businesses and those who are self-employed. Based on this data, North Middlesex continues to have a strong local concentration of agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting businesses and continues to increase in the number of businesses in this industry.

It should be noted that North Middlesex has three industry sectors where there is an average local concentration:

- Transportation and warehousing (LQ of 0.97)
- Construction (LQ of 0.90)

FIGURE 54 LOCATION QUOTIENTS BY NUMBER OF BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS PER INDUSTRY, NORTH MIDDLESEX VS. ONTARIO, 2008 & 2013

Industry (NAICS)	vs Ontario			
	2008		2013	
	LQ	Classification	LQ	Classification
11 - Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	13.41	High	11.68	High
21 - Mining and oil and gas extraction	0.00	Low	0.00	Low
22 - Utilities	0.00	Low	0.00	Low
23 - Construction	0.72	Low	0.90	Average
31-33 - Manufacturing	0.85	Average	0.45	Low
41 - Wholesale trade	0.41	Low	0.51	Low
44-45 - Retail trade	0.68	Low	0.63	Low
48-49 - Transportation and warehousing	0.92	Average	0.97	Average
51 - Information and cultural industries	0.48	Low	0.07	Low
52 - Finance and insurance	0.30	Low	0.46	Low
53 - Real estate and rental and leasing	0.23	Low	0.48	Low
54 - Professional, scientific and technical services	0.15	Low	0.26	Low
55 - Management of companies and enterprises	0.47	Low	0.87	Average
56 - Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	0.47	Low	0.60	Low
61 - Educational services	0.70	Low	0.36	Low
62 - Health care and social assistance	0.57	Low	0.49	Low
71 - Arts, entertainment and recreation	0.63	Low	0.40	Low
72 - Accommodation and food services	0.57	Low	0.56	Low
81 - Other services (except public administration)	0.72	Low	0.64	Low
91 - Public administration	0.14	Low	1.89	High

Note: 0 - 0.74 = Low, 0.75 - 1.24 = Average, 1.25+ = High

Source: Statistics Canada. Canadian Business Patterns December 2008 and 2013

²⁷ Local concentration by location quotient (LQ). An LQ measures the concentration of business activity in a local area (e.g. North Middlesex) relative to an over-arching area (e.g. Ontario). An LQ of over 1.25 suggests a local relative concentration of activity. In theory, this suggests the local sector is exceeding local demand, and exporting products/services to areas outside of the local community. A sector LQ of less than 0.75 suggests a gap area, where the local business community is theoretically falling short of local demand. From a labour force perspective, LQs may offer insight into where local concentrations of industry-relevant skills may exist.



- Management of companies and enterprises (LQ of 0.87)

Figure 55 below provides a 2013 snapshot of the North Middlesex's business count at the most detailed level of businesses categorizations. From this figure it is evident that agriculture and agricultural related businesses account for a considerable number of local businesses within the municipality, which includes the following:

- Oilseed and grain farming
- Cattle ranching and farming
- Hog and pig farming
- Other crop farming
- Other animal production
- Poultry and egg production
- Support activities for crop production

FIGURE 55 TOP BUSINESSES BY NUMBER OF BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS, NORTH MIDDLESEX, 2013

Industry (NAICS)	Total	Indeterminate	Subtotal	# of Employees					
				1-4	5-9	10-19	20-49	50-99	100+
Oilseed and grain farming	174	161	13	11	2	0	0	0	0
Cattle ranching and farming	49	41	8	6	2	0	0	0	0
Hog and pig farming	49	36	13	10	2	1	0	0	0
Lessors of real estate	33	30	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
General freight trucking	29	17	12	10	1	1	0	0	0
Residential building construction	28	16	12	8	4	0	0	0	0
Other crop farming	27	26	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Management of companies and enterprises	23	17	6	3	2	0	0	1	0
Other animal production	18	17	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Poultry and egg production	17	12	5	3	1	1	0	0	0
Building equipment contractors	14	6	8	6	0	2	0	0	0
Other specialty trade contractors	14	4	10	5	3	2	0	0	0
Other financial investment activities	14	11	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
Automotive repair and maintenance	13	7	6	3	3	0	0	0	0
Services to buildings and dwellings	12	4	8	3	4	1	0	0	0
Foundation, structure, and building exterior contractors	11	2	9	7	2	0	0	0	0
Support activities for crop production	9	7	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places	9	2	7	2	5	0	0	0	0
Management, scientific and technical consulting services	8	6	2	2	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Statistics Canada. Canadian Business Patterns, 2014



Furthermore, a majority of the business listed above are individuals who are self-employed. In total, the businesses listed above accounted for 343 establishments in North Middlesex, 44% of total business counts.

Of those businesses listed in [Figure 55](#) (excluding the self-employed), 98.4% employ less than 20 workers which again highlights the importance and concentration of small businesses in North Middlesex. It should be noted that only one sub-sector of the businesses sectors listed in [Figure 55](#), “management of companies and enterprises”, employed more than 49 workers.

This section has shown the wealth of small businesses and the self-employed located within North Middlesex. Therefore, to support future growth and investment in the municipality, it is essential to understand and support the needs of the small businesses. This is particularly relevant in light of existing research and trends which suggest that a substantial percentage of new business investment in a community is derived from companies already located there, and a significant amount of job creation and innovation is increasingly being driven by small to medium sized businesses.

10.6 Community Consultations

10.6.1 Project Launch at Town Hall Meeting

On September 26, 2015, a Town Hall meeting was held to officially launch the strategic planning process and share the schedule for the Economic Development Strategy for North Middlesex. A series of four questions were posed to residents, council, administration, business owners and ratepayers of North Middlesex who attended this meeting in an attempt to offer the general public an opportunity to participate in shaping their economic future.

The findings that emerged from the public engagement are captured by question below:

What do you cherish most about your community?

- Quality of life
 - Lower stress, affordability, small town vibe, nice place to live, friendly, and familiarity
- Location
 - Offers access to highways, larger urban areas, shopping and entertainment amenities
- Health services and care
- Family friendly and has numerous schools/playschools
- Community spirit and civic pride
- Local business and agricultural sector
- Recreational and natural resources

What are the top three priorities that must be addressed in the Economic Development Strategy?

- Affordable living and housing for all ages
- Creating a destination place and increasing local spending
- Community revitalization and Downtown beautification
- Increasing employment through small business supports, expansion, and attraction

- Collaboration with community and neighbouring areas
- Municipal investment readiness: Land development, servicing, multi-level government relations, marketing and promotion, etc.
- High speed rural internet and community asset improvements

What does economic development mean to you?

- Affordable living and housing for all ages
- Creating a destination place and increasing local spending
- Community revitalization and Downtown beautification
- Increasing employment through small business supports, expansion, and attraction
- Collaboration with community and neighbouring areas
- Municipal investment readiness: Land development, servicing, multi-level government relations, marketing and promotion, etc.
- High speed rural internet and community asset improvements

What do you want your community to be known for?

- Growing population with more families and youth
- Vibrant local commercial and service sector
- More medical and health care services
- Export oriented and value-added agricultural industry
- Affordable, age friendly community that promotes a high quality of life
- Connected community through transportation and transit services
- Sustainable and growing small businesses and more local employers

10.6.2 Economic Development Strategy Session

On October 19, 2015 a workshop was held with members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) to share the initial survey findings and get some input on the major elements of a strategic plan for the next five years.

A series of four questions were posed to the committee, where the findings and strategies that emerged from the workshop are captured by question below:

When we look at North Middlesex's Economic Development program five years into the future, how will we know that we got it right?

- Diversification of the agricultural industry
 - Introduce small scale farming, specialized crops and production, greenhouses, and Agri-tourism
 - Allow for land severances (e.g. allowing to lots that are less than 40 hectares to reduce land costs and promote small and diversified farming)
- Healthy and thriving commercial Main Street
 - Introduce shop local campaigns
 - Build upon Shopping Extravaganza in Alisa Craig
- Quality of life and an affordable place to live
 - Affordable housing for all ages
 - Affordable child care
 - Ensuring high school stays
- New residential development
 - Ensure wastewater is expanded to more than just the urban areas for increased development
 - Growth should be targeted

What are the key priority areas that need attention?

- Marketing and promotion of North Middlesex
 - Promoting the community as community to live, work and play
 - Communicating that North Middlesex is not so far away from large urban centres
 - Attract new residents, families and business
- New residential and affordable housing

- Need to attract developers to the community to build
- Address any 'red tape' that could be impeding development (e.g. policies, costs, etc.)
- Schools must stay open for this to happen
- Agricultural diversification
 - Encourage entrepreneurs by supporting them through identifying lands, businesses and any gaps that might be present.
 - Examine the need for a market analysis initiative
- Infrastructure
 - Ensure that internet access is available to those outside of the urban areas of the community and work with the County on increasing access
 - Industrial corridors exist, but require servicing prior to development

What do you consider the greatest opportunities for North Middlesex to stimulate economic growth in the next 5 years?

- Community engagement
 - Great sense of community
 - High entrepreneurial spirit
 - The strength of the service clubs in the community (e.g. horticulture, optimist group, lions club, etc.)
 - Array of community events (e.g. Santa Claus parade, car show, quilt festival, gala days, etc.)
 - Success of the YMCA
- Location
 - Proximity to major highways
 - Close to major urban centres
 - Beaches and natural areas
- Opportunities for rezoning land for commercial and industrial purposes
- Great water infrastructure

- Availability of skilled workers

What barriers stand in the way of advancing these opportunities?

- Development process
 - Development processes are lengthy and difficult to understand
 - Ensure that development fees are competitive with neighbouring communities
 - Remove any policies or procedures in the Municipality's plans that may present barriers to development
- Costs of living
 - Need for affordable housing
 - Costs of commuting
- Lack of promotion of the community
 - Educate people on what North Middlesex has to offer and why it is a great place to live and work
 - Reintroduce a welcome wagon for new residents and businesses
- Lack of functional website
 - Needs to be more user friendly
 - Utilized for community promotion
 - Introduce an economic development component
- Limited employment opportunities
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Apprehension to move things forward

Are there any existing projects or ideas that EDAC has that could be validated through the strategic planning process?

- Website
- Complete land inventory

- Main Street program
- Business directory

What does Municipal Council need to do first to influence the Economic Development Strategy's success?

- Enhance and continue ongoing support
 - Set and follow through on vision
 - Increase collaboration efforts
 - Support the implementation through incentives, funding and having qualified individuals responsible for coordination
 - Support the active BIA
 - Facilitate the creation of a North Middlesex networking group or association (e.g. Mayor's breakfast)
 - Build the vibrancy of the downtown to be the face of the community
- Communicating that North Middlesex is the place to raise a family and start a business
- Measure success through indicators
- Review any by-laws pertaining to development and growth

10.6.3 Economic Development Strategy Session

On October 24, 2015, North Middlesex Council held a special meeting of Council, where Trudy Parsons, Executive Vice-President, presented an overview of the strategic planning process. This overview reviewed the initial findings of the North Middlesex Community Profile and community consultations and allowed the opportunity for Council to provide its input on the direction economic development should be taking in the community.

Council provided their insight to the following question:

When we look at North Middlesex's Economic Development program five years into the future, how will we know that we got it right?

- When residents in North Middlesex are encouraged and involved in being part of the plans
- Schools are fully occupied and remain open

- Growth in residential and business development
 - Focus on attracting businesses that will fit within North Middlesex
 - Attract younger families
 - Services to support residential growth and commuting into London

What types of businesses should North Middlesex attract?

- Call centres (but will require expanded internet access)
- Agricultural businesses, dealers and suppliers to agricultural industry

What are the key areas that the program should be addressing?

- Re-examine Municipality's by-laws
 - Need to allow agricultural zones to sever its land to provide places for agriculture processing and allow businesses to expand
- Diversification of agricultural industry
 - Only municipality in surrounding area to not have a greenhouse operation
 - Re-examine zoning of agricultural lands
- Opportunities through Trans-Pacific Partnerships
 - Smaller scale and local production, leading to exporting internationally
- Need for new residential development
 - Senior and family housing
- Encouraging home based businesses
- Expand recreational activity based businesses

Are there other measures that may be of value?

- Development Charges

- Are fairly high
- Ensure that they are competitive with neighbouring communities
- Better promotion of the community to external residents and business
- Combating the trend of larger farm sizes
 - Contributes to the declining population in rural area

10.6.4 Economic Development 101 Workshop

On October 27, 2015, Brock Dickinson, CEO of MDB Insight gave a public presentation to Council, administration and any residents in attendance on the importance of economic development and what it means to a community. This presentation highlighted that economic development is not a “one size fits all” approach to growth and prosperity. Instead, successful economic development must be firmly grounded in the unique and specific context of an individual community.

Following the presentation, those who were in attendance were provided the opportunity to offer their ideas and input on what the direction the economic development strategy should take.

The community input is summarized below:

Feedback from the community during the Economic Development 101 workshop indicated that there have been challenges in informing businesses of the other businesses in North Middlesex. As well, people are increasingly unaware of what is available or provided within the community indicating that there are gaps in the marketing of the town (internally and externally) in terms of what it has to offer.

Input from the community provided ideas, goals, issues and opportunities and final thoughts in regards to addressing the problems of miscommunication between the community, residents and prospective residents and businesses.

Ideas

- Promote Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E)
- Networking between businesses
 - Ensure that information is being shared and readily available

Goals

- Encourage entrepreneurial spirit
 - Get people excited about North Middlesex and stir up creative energy
 - Need to support small business
- Better communication
 - Get the news of North Middlesex out
 - Engage newcomers to town (e.g. welcome wagon)
- Attraction and retention of youth

Issues and Opportunities

- Keep the high school open
 - Possible conversion of half of the building into a physical rehabilitation centre
 - Introducing economic development at the school
- Rural Health Hub
- Youth Advocacy committee of Council
- Community collaboration between Parkhill and Alisa Craig
- Keep small town feel

Final Thoughts

- Ensure the community is engaged and part of the economic development process

Small, gradual steps will lead to successful development

10.6.5 Community Focus Groups

On November 5, 2015 a public consultation in the Municipality of North Middlesex was held in order to gain important input into the development of the Municipality's Economic Development Strategy and to offer the general public an opportunity to participate in shaping their economic future.

A series of four questions were posed to the working groups. The findings that emerged from the public engagement are captured by question below:

What do you cherish most about your community?

- Rural and convenient location
- Walkability of community
- Close to a variety of diverse amenities
- Natural and conservation areas
- Great school system
- Good public facilities (e.g. libraries, Town Hall)
- Youth sport programs
- Strong volunteer base and active service clubs
- Friendly community and good people
- Quality of life

What are the top three priorities that must be addressed in the Economic Development Strategy?

- Attract young families to live in the community
- Provide incentives and remove red tape to attract and promote development (e.g. lower development charges, re-zoning, alternative agriculture production)
- Keeping the high school open
- Better promotion of the community
- Attracting new business
- Housing for seniors
- Local business development assistance
- Internet accessibility

What does economic development mean to you?

- Attract new businesses and future employment opportunities through targeted promotion as North Middlesex as a place to do business
- Retain and promote local businesses
- Attracting new residents to increase population growth
- More job opportunities
- Future business growth and sustainability

What do you want your community to be known for?

- Safe, progressive, affordable, and attractive
- Volunteerism in the community
- A beautiful town
- A great and thriving place to live
- Growing agricultural base and open to development
- Good school system
- Great quality of life

10.6.6 Stakeholder Focus Group

On November 5, 2015 a strategic planning session was held with key economic development stakeholders from the local investment and development community. In all, 7 individuals participated. The group was taken through a series of questions in a facilitated discussion. The findings are identified below thematically, and are categorized by question topic.

When we look at North Middlesex's Economic Development program 5 years into the future, how will we know that we got it right?

Participants were asked for feedback related to what their perspective were on the outcomes North Middlesex should be targeting for its economic development program. The following outcomes were identified:

- Increases in employment and population

- Attraction of large and small scale business
- Increases in local shopping
- Creation of industrial park(s) and flexible zoning
- New affordable and senior housing, as well as more diverse housing (e.g. apartments)
- Shovel ready industrial lands
- A more diverse economy
- Serviced land for all types of development (e.g. natural gas, wastewater)
- Better access to high-speed internet
- Increased incentives and better administrative support for developers
- Youth attraction and re branding of the community

What are the first three priority areas that need attention?

- Infrastructure for industry and residents
 - Specifically high speed fibre optic internet
 - Address issues of the sanitary/sewage system
 - Issues concerning water flow with new buildings related to safety considerations
- Lands needs assessment
 - Ensuring agriculture is not restricted by zoning
 - Flexibility and allows for adjustments for land use and types of permitted development
- Residential growth
 - Attraction and retention of youth, prevent the closure of the high school
- Business retention
 - Providing incentives for business to locate or stay in North Middlesex
 - Creation of an industrial park
- Ensure the community is attractive to residents and business
 - Open minded and forward looking Council

- Rebranding of the community and better promotion of the culture, history and natural areas North Middlesex has to offer
- Address the mosquito problem

What do you consider to be the greatest opportunities for North Middlesex to stimulate economic growth in the next 5 years?

- Agriculture
 - Conducive climate and soil for agriculture
 - Agri-tourism
 - Promotion of North Middlesex as an agricultural hub, innovator, and home to international exporters
 - Continue to leverage and promote the agricultural base
 - Processing opportunities for agricultural products
- Attract youth back to the community
 - Offer incentives to return after leaving for post-secondary
 - Mentorship programming
- Local business development
 - Include service industries within the business association
 - Increased information sharing for and among businesses
 - Promotion of home based businesses
 - Up to date inventory of available land
- Meeting the demands of seniors
 - Accessible and affordable housing
 - Good healthcare services
 - Increasing leisure and recreation activities geared towards active seniors
- High Speed Internet

- Federal funding available with the province matching funding
- Better promotion of the community as a place to live and start a family
 - Continued support of the new libraries initiatives
- Zoning for industrial lands
- Availability of land
- Affordable housing developments
- Increasing transportation access and proximity to major highways
- Use of the available Downtown revitalization funding
- Increased communication between the communities in North Middlesex

What barriers stand in the way of advancing these opportunities?

- Costs and restrictions of development
 - Land and severance restrictions
- Small and shrinking tax base
- Lack of shovel-ready industrial land and lack of servicing for commercial and residential development
- Lack of high speed internet
- Need more incentives and support for local business owners to expand
- Urban vs rural lens in Federal and Provincial policies
- Lack of industry other than agricultural
- A lack of Council vision for future growth and development
- Recreational facilities
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of coordination within the business association
- Need a community coordinator
- Lack of employment for youth
- Need better promotion of the community

- Seen as too far away from large urban centres

10.7 Stakeholder Interviews

The following section contains the combined feedback provided by the various community stakeholders who participated in the interview process. In total, 20 individuals volunteered their time to participate in this process. The interviews were targeted and included individuals from a wide variety of background including residents, business owners and operators, health care professionals, school administrators, cultural and tourism stakeholders, and farmers and agricultural representatives, among others. It should be noted that contacts were made with individuals who were raised in the Municipality and may have moved elsewhere to learn from their external experience, those who have moved to the Municipality from elsewhere and others who were raised and remain living within the Municipality in order to obtain a view from inside and outside of the municipality.

The comments are grouped into common themes where possible and are categorized according to the questionnaire that framed the conversations.

What do you see as the municipality's greatest assets (strengths)?

- Safe,
- Low cost of living
- Quality of life
- Friendly people, tight knit community, proud of their community
- Farming, agriculture based community, strong rural base,
- Food production
- Central location, proximity to other cities, logistics works,
- Lots of land, agriculturally rich
- Recreation and natural environment
- Investments in infrastructure electricity natural gas, water, waste water
- Retirement community
- Bedroom community
- Good services, recreation services
- Less red tape than other communities

- Good supply of potential employees
- Picturesque, quaint main streets
- Walkable town
- Convenient: all the services you need are here.

Are we utilizing these to our advantage?

No

- Currently doing very little to support and attract business, haven't seen a lot of growth
- Should be taking advantage of traffic through town
- Vacant buildings downtown affect the town's image
- We are pushing business away
- Could be celebrating local agriculture more with farmers markets and local farming events
- Haven't embraced small town business and downtown niche business
- Need to take a risk to develop commercial, industrial and residential property
- More awareness of the services available locally is needed
- No large employers
- Need to work closer with local businesses and understand what supports they need.
- Money from the wind turbines should be better utilized

Yes

- Building on the downtowns
- More potential in agricultural innovation

What opportunities should North Middlesex pursue in next 3-5 years to stimulate economic growth and business investment?

- Attract residential development
 - Development charge freeze/ reduction

- Free service hook-ups
 - Promote to London residents and businesses
 - Subdivision development
 - Make it more inviting for young families
 - Work with residential developers
 - Work with property owners to encourage growth and development
 - Provide residences and services for seniors
 - Update the official plan to allow for a variety of housing options
 - Strive to be an immigrant friendly community
 - Need young people in the community
 - Need jobs to attract new residents
- Downtown development
 - Revitalize, beautify downtown Parkhill & Ailsa Craig
 - Redevelop feed building in Ailsa Craig (currently a storage facility)
 - Repurpose vacant buildings in downtowns
 - Increase foot traffic in downtowns
 - Market downtowns beyond North Middlesex as destination or local business & shopping
 - Encourage niche businesses which will attract urban customers
 - Use the OMAFRA downtown revitalization program
- Tourism
 - Rails to trails route
 - High quality mural program
 - Tourist related retailers
 - Relocated locomotive & train bridge
 - Heritage home plaque program
 - Restaurant, hotel/motel in Ailsa Craig
 - Professional theatre
 - Tourists at the lake; bring them to Parkhill on rainy days.
 - Bed and breakfast community

- Rural health community hub
- Collaborate with YMCA
- Weekend health fairs
- Recreational and social health programs
- Barrier free town
- Agriculture
 - Support agri-business, agri-culinary and agri- tourism enterprises
 - Specialty food production
 - Attract raw goods processing and value added agriculture production
 - Support greenhouse development
 - Establish community as an agricultural services hub
 - Focus on attracting existing businesses to move here that they will enjoy a lower cost of living and lower operating costs for their business...freeing up their money to expand
 - Create additional jobs in new food products, agricultural diversification
 - Encourage farmers to upgrade farms & buildings, hire local workers
- Local business promotion, support & celebration
 - Small business workshops – grant application writing, sales, business plans, finances, etc.
 - Offer more programs locally
 - Clean up store fronts
 - Provide free store front to a business as part of a small business contest (like South Bruce)
 - Business Retention & Expansion program,
 - More communication between towns & businesses
 - Annual Mayor's breakfast
 - Encourage businesses to participate in Premiers awards, provincial recognition programs
 - Promote OMAFRA's Rural Economic Development (RED) program
 - Conduct Certified Site Program
- Participate with regional programs



- County, Western Wardens, Regional Tourism Organization (RTO)
- Introduce businesses to regional support organizations
- High School
 - Retain the high school
 - Redevelop the high school
- Marketing & Communication
 - Regular communications and outreach with businesses on events, programs, new businesses, municipal news & support
 - Inform local business & residents of what we have to offer
 - Target business associations (i.e. homebuilders associations)
 - Target London & Sarnia businesses and residents

General Perspectives on Opportunities

- Small scale manufacturing
- Parking or areas for stopping for transport trucks
- Retain grocery store
- Establish a free electricity zone in Ailsa Craig
- Attract a Tim Horton's in Ailsa Craig
- Target Internet based business (need increased internet quality and accessibility)
- Attract a Driver Examination Centre
- Infrastructure investment for longer term growth (Ailsa Craig water main system too small for industry, hydro system at capacity)
- Business incubator in old Parkhill library and Ailsa Craig old Town Hall
- 3-year deal starting with low rent to full market prices over 36 months, shared admin office & equipment, meeting rooms and marketing
- Is there an opportunity for a health hub? What about building a nursing home or seniors residence
- The libraries in Parkhill & Ailsa Craig could support the economic development strategy and community building

Are you familiar with the available land (inventory) in North Middlesex?

Somewhat

- needs to be redeveloped
- adjacent to smaller centres – not where we need it

No (majority response)

Types of suitable development

- Agricultural land should be protected
 - Allow for severances for agricultural innovations
- Residential development
 - Single family housing development
 - Adult lifestyle development, (more modern and promote active lifestyle)
 - Senior living/ Barrier free housing
 - Few developers are prepared to move on it because of the cost & necessary expertise)
 - Executive homes targeting professionals working in north end of London
- Industries that utilize raw resources
- Residential and commercial mix
- Industrial land
 - Small scale industrial
 - Serviced sites (certified site program)
 - Agriculture processing
 - Unique agricultural enterprises

What can be done to help encourage more people to come live, work, play and stay?

- Marketing campaign
 - Send a message that North Middlesex is “open for business”
 - Look at Lucan Biddulph and the waive on development charges
 - Promote schools, benefits of small town living, rural, safe community
 - Promote recreational facilities
 - Word of mouth
- Attract jobs to attract new residents
- Clean up Parkhill's reputation
- Retain high school
 - Restrict bussing out of town
- Downtown facelift
- Additional recreational facilities in Ailsa Craig and Nairn
- Residential development
- Offer affordable housing
- Maintain tax rate
- Keep development costs down
- No monster houses
- Offer competitive permit costs & fees to build homes
- Bring broadband connectivity in the municipality
- Provide Wi-Fi in the downtowns
- Work with colleges & universities
- Youth friendly programming
- Address transportation barrier
- Recreation facilities: public dog park, skate park

- Put an engineer on retainer
- Significant infrastructure upgrading to address drainage and flooding

What would you suggest might be the types of housing needed in North Middlesex as the community continues to grow?

- Mix – rental apartments, townhouses, condos, semi-detached, starter homes, mid-range & luxury
- Affordable housing
- Larger houses with larger lots
- No townhomes (one person)
- Barrier free housing for seniors
- Single family homes
- Low rise apartments with more than one bedroom
- Condos/ apartments for pre-retirement/ retirement age
- Higher density housing would be required to generate increased school enrollment
- More rental opportunities
- Needs to stay in urbanized areas
- Executive homes
- High end apartments

How do you see this impacting future growth?

- Will appeal to young families for our schools, seniors for retirement, to businesses looking to relocate
- Will create more demand for skilled health care workers
- Will create recreation services jobs
- Seniors will spend their money locally
- Will intensify development in urban areas
- Should support growth projections
- Should dovetail with jobs



- People want to live where their kids can attend schools, school funding in Ontario is based on a per pupil amount, the number of students you have impacts the viability of programs

What are some challenges that limit economic development and sustainability for North Middlesex?

- Limited budgets for economic development and promotion; have to spend money to make money
- Lack of marketing effort
 - Need to identify targets
- Population & Demographics
 - Market size – less people to buy products
 - Population decline
 - Turnover in residents
 - Aging farmers, declining small farmers
 - The number of farm houses is declining, North Middlesex needs the assessment base to provide the required services
 - Need succession planning for retiring farmers in community
- Access
 - Distance from major highways
 - Isolated from rest of the County
 - Country roads in the winter aren't very good
 - Transportation costs are high
- Municipal Practices
 - No incentives to attract residents, taxes can't be reduced
 - Development charges are too high
 - Zoning and severance barriers
 - Takes a long time to do anything
 - No communication from the town

- Commercial development next to homes
- Outdated infrastructure – issues with drainage and flooding
- Infrastructure won't support certain development
- Reputation: low income community
- No surplus buildings to attract new businesses
- Threat of high school closure
- Challenge finding jobs locally for everyone in the family
- People resistant to change, not welcoming new development
- Downtowns not attractive, vacant buildings
- License bureau problems reflect badly on whole downtown
- Limited housing availability
- Our electrical costs, labour, health care and pension programs are more expensive than other communities

How can we build relationships to strengthen our economic development efforts?

- Communicate with residents and businesses
 - Educate local residents/businesses on the potential we have
 - Get a list of businesses in the community & what they do
 - Schedule visits with local businesses
- Target businesses & residents we want to relocate here
- Sister cities agreements
- Leverage/ create community ambassadors
- Leverage wind farm investment
- Provide low taxes & incentives
- Provide incentives to encourage property and owners to invest
- Council should rely on the expertise of the administration
- Business Services
 - Provide economic development services, resources through local libraries

- Provide jobs shadowing, co-op opportunities in the community
- Business workshops & presentations
- Bring together Parkhill & Ailsa Craig businesses
- Establish down town business association, local chamber
- Reach out to agricultural base & continue to develop it

Who should these stronger relationships be with?

- Potential Investors
- Local businesses
- Local residents
- Brands/ businesses that thrive in small communities
- Other governments
- The hospital
- London & Sarnia residents and businesses
- Downtown businesses
- Agricultural businesses & associations, farmers
- London based developers
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs
- County, other municipalities, other rural communities
- Agencies that provide economic development resources
- Regional Tourism Organization
- Zoomer magazine, Canadian Association of Retired People, GTA business groups and chambers of commerce
- Developers and property owners
- Wind farm developers

What do you think the Municipality will be known for 5 - 10 years from now?

- Thriving farming community

- Quality of life, rural/ small town living
- Good place to raise a family
- Retirement community, barrier free living
- Providing essential services for seniors and others that do not drive (Community schools, arena, post office, shops & restaurants)
- Open and welcoming people encouraging small business and home based businesses
- Severing land for houses and residential development
- Strong agri-businesses
- Family community that looks after each other
- Eco town, alternative health businesses
- Unique amenities (walking trail, old town experience, festivals, bustling community)

What is your vision for North Middlesex?

- Thriving farming community that offers alternatives to the city lifestyle
- A memorable downtown core
- Enjoyable to visit
- Affordable downtown core, visually appealing with a vibrant business community
- A vibrant agricultural community
- Attractive and small communities
- Quaint, appealing beautiful
- Quality place to live
- Development in Ailsa Craig
- New subdivision in Parkhill
- Diverse, vibrant economy
- Centre for supply of products to the world, value added processing
- A place that is more aware of its assets and potential
- Self-promoters that work together, spreading good news, opportunities
- Young families come and build the community

- Children have the same teachers as their parents
- Downtown buildings filled with shops,
- Lots of marketing, events
- Enjoyable downtown retail experience

From your perspective/travels, what makes a community memorable or stand out for you?

- Beautiful vistas, natural areas, farmland
- Well maintained properties, well-kept homes
- Main street with beautiful buildings, heritage buildings, historic streetscape attractive signs
- Well supported downtowns; unique independent stores & restaurants with community connections
- Efficient management of the downtown
- Successful local businesses, lots of business activity
- A place to volunteer, youth volunteerism
- Excellent local facilities, recreational offerings, local parks
- Overall look of a community,
- Welcoming, friendly people, knowing your neighbours, small town living
- Activities for residents; i.e. badminton clubs
- Unique attractions
- Ambassadors
- The people and how they work together, committed citizens
- Cultural communities: local artisans, theatre, music, special events, church bazaars
- Self-sufficient community – schools
- Signage, street façade investments and improvements in the downtown help

Is there anything you would like to add that is of relevance to this project?

- I'm very encouraged this plan is being developed
- Low unemployment rate (4%) is virtually full employment

- Ensure the Employer One Survey is completed
- Need young people on Council
- Good to keep the grocery stores open
- North Middlesex should encourage more exporting
- As a business owner I would welcome a visit from the municipality asking what they could do to help me
- Need storefront improvements for empty buildings – no one is stepping up to help
- We shouldn't be cutting down healthy trees on Main Street
- The projected enrolment numbers for the high school speak for themselves. We would see economic development as really important to move the community forward. The annual pupil accommodation report will be discussed with the Thames Valley District School board on November 24, 2015.