



Economic Diversification

Municipality of Middlesex Centre

Discussion Paper

Fall 2020

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In association with:





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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Full Description of Acronym
A.I.	Artificial intelligence
C.M.A.	Census Metropolitan Area
G.D.P.	Gross domestic product
G.G.H.	Greater Golden Horseshoe
M.C.R.	Municipal comprehensive review
N.F.P.O.W.	No fixed place of work
O.P.	Official Plan
P.P.S.	Provincial Policy Statement
S.W.O.T.C.	Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation
U.S.	United States
V.P.N.	Virtual private network



1. Introduction

Communities across southern Ontario are in the midst of a demographic and economic shift that requires a re-evaluation of how they address future economic development. To address this shift, economic development strategies have moved well beyond business attraction and towards activities that build economies from within. Economic diversification is seen as an opportunity to both support business attraction and expand on the Municipality's existing economic base. This discussion paper briefly explores the key themes that will be discussed as part of the Economic Diversification Strategy which is currently being undertaken by the Municipality of Middlesex Centre as part of its Official Plan (O.P.) review.

1.1 What is an Economic Diversification Strategy?

The primary objective of an Economic Diversification Strategy is to develop approaches, tools, and policies that better position the local economy towards a wider range of economic sectors, business operations and land-use activities. Such strategies have been widely adopted by municipalities to encourage sustainable economic growth and prosperity. It is important to recognize that pursuing economic diversification is not limited to attracting new businesses. Economic diversification also includes examining opportunities to support existing businesses in expanding and identifying opportunities for cross-over economic sectors (e.g. agriculture and tourism; agriculture and industrial; education and research; as well as recreational and retail). Cross-over economic sector opportunities typically involve expanding on anchor sectors, institutions, or large employers of the Municipality and creating “spin-offs” or ancillary business operations. An example of a cross-over economic activity within a rural context may include an apple harvester that expands its farming operations to include the pressing of apples for cider, or a farmer who packages cut vegetables into consumer-ready salad. Within an industrial context, an example of cross-over economic activity may include the expansion of a warehousing operation to include on-site assembly and manufacturing.

1.2 Why is Economic Diversification Important for Middlesex Centre?

Economic diversification has been identified as a high priority for the Municipality of Middlesex Centre. The majority of developed properties within Middlesex Centre are



either agricultural or residential, with comparatively few industrial or commercial properties. This narrow tax base limits the revenues for the Municipality and may lead to a challenge in the Municipality's ability to meet its increasing municipal servicing requirements.¹ Further, economic diversification provides opportunities to provide a range of services to support local residents, including accommodating a wide range of employment opportunities for local residents.

1.3 How Can a Municipality Support Diversification?

The following are key areas that a Municipality should explore in supporting diversification:

- Ensuring an adequate supply of serviced or “shovel-ready” employment lands to support export activities;
- Review of land-use policies that are reflective of recent economic trends and the anticipated outlook for industrial and commercial development;
- Review of land-use policies that support employment growth within the rural area, including on-farm diversified activities;
- Promoting vibrant downtown and commercial areas that support office uses, tourism and consumer spending within the Municipality; and
- Identifying key sectors for economic development promotion.

It is important to recognize that economic diversification requires municipalities to balance supporting new opportunities while ensuring compatibility with existing businesses and residential uses. Economic development goals must be further balanced against the protection of the environment and agricultural lands.

A key component of developing an Economic Diversification Strategy is anticipating economic trends and identifying employment opportunities for the Municipality. This discussion paper explores the outlook for employment sectors, including a review of disruptors and opportunities within the context of the surrounding economic region and beyond.

¹ Municipality of Middlesex Centre, Strategic Plan, 2012-2017, p. 24.

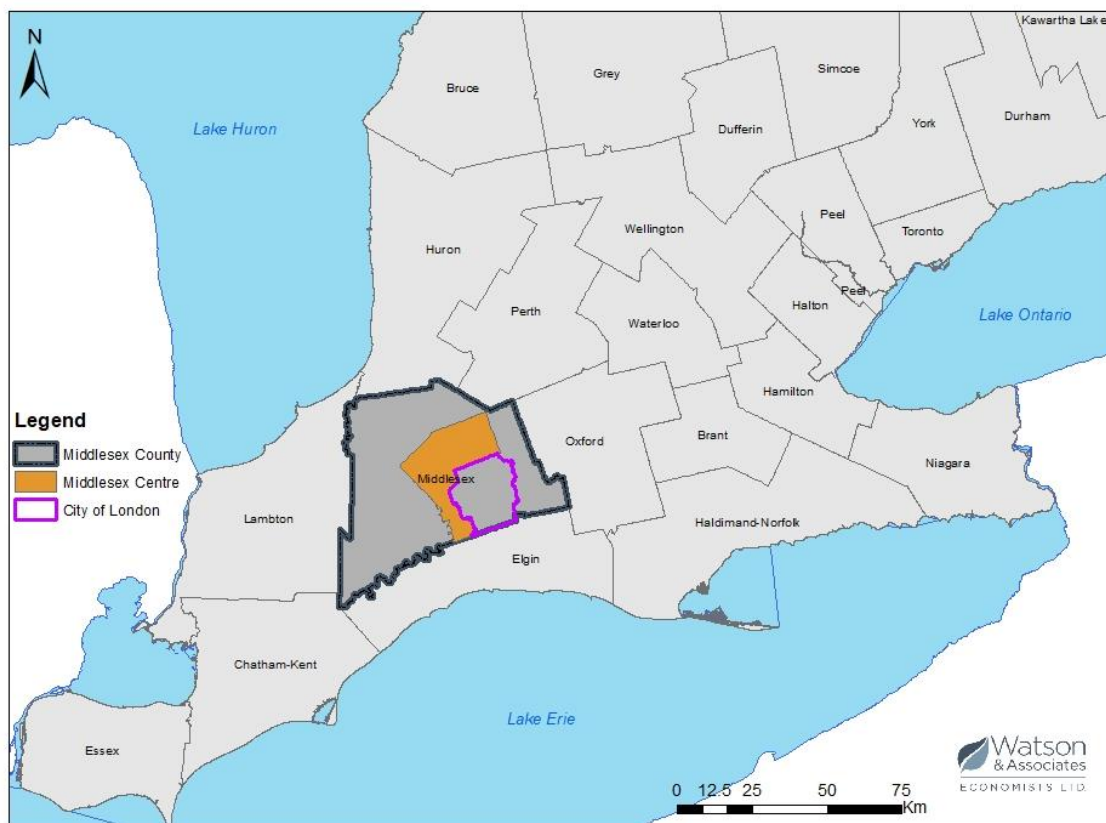


2. Background

2.1 Regional Context

Located in Middlesex County within southwestern Ontario, Middlesex Centre is geographically well-positioned. The Municipality offers good access to Highways 401 and 402 and provides access to three major border crossings to the United States (U.S.): Windsor/Detroit and Sarnia/Port Huron and Fort Erie/Buffalo. Over the past decade the Municipality has experienced steady population growth and is anticipated to be one of the fastest growing municipalities in the region over the next several decades.

Map 1
Location of the Municipality of Middlesex Centre within Middlesex County



The Municipality of Middlesex Centre shares a high level of socio-economic activity with the broader London Census Metropolitan Area (C.M.A.). It also generally shares the assets of this region when considering its competitive advantages and strengths in



investment attraction (e.g. regional transportation infrastructure and labour force supply). As such, it is important for the Municipality to work with its neighbouring municipalities and the County to market these strengths and enhance the regional profile of this area. It is also important to recognize that the competitiveness of this economic region is dependent on a number of dynamic factors related to the relative costs of non-residential development (i.e. industrial land prices, property taxes, development charges), labour force supply, and non-residential land needs. These are important factors which require on-going consideration by the County and each of its local municipalities when addressing the relative competitive position of the County and its individual municipalities compared to business retention and investment attraction relative to competitors.

2.2 Planning for Economic Growth within the Context of an Evolving Economy

Recent structural changes in the macro-economy experienced over the past several decades have been well documented. At the provincial level, Ontario's economic base, as measured by G.D.P. (gross domestic product) output, has shifted from the goods-producing sector (i.e. manufacturing and primary resources) to services-producing sectors. Much of this shift has occurred during the past two decades, driven by G.D.P. declines in the manufacturing sector which were most significant immediately following the 2008/2009 global economic downturn. In contrast, service-based sectors such as financial and business services have seen significant increases over the past several years. As a result of these structural changes occurring in the macro-economy, it is important to recognize that the above-mentioned trends will generate both positive and disruptive economic impacts related to labour force demand, local G.D.P., industrial, commercial and retail space requirements, as well as long-term employment land needs.

3. Overview of Middlesex Centre's Economic Base






3.1 Middlesex Centre Employment Trends

The top five employment sectors with respect to number of employees within Middlesex Centre include: agriculture (14%), construction (10%), manufacturing (10%), education (10%), and health care and social services (8%), as summarized in Figure 1. These top



five employment sectors within Middlesex Centre represent approximately 52% of the employment base within the Municipality. As noted above, the Municipality of Middlesex Centre has a strong agricultural sector with farm receipts in excess of \$600 million. The Municipality is also rich in architecture and natural heritage which provides opportunities to attract a “creative class” employment sector (those engaged in arts and culture) and tourism.

Figure 1
Municipality of Middlesex Centre
Top Five Employment Sectors based on Share of Employment

Share of Employment	 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	 Construction	 Manufacturing	 Educational services	 Health care and social assistance
Municipality of Middlesex Centre	13.8%	10.0%	10.4%	9.6%	8.4%
Province of Ontario	1.5%	3.6%	10.6%	7.9%	11.6%

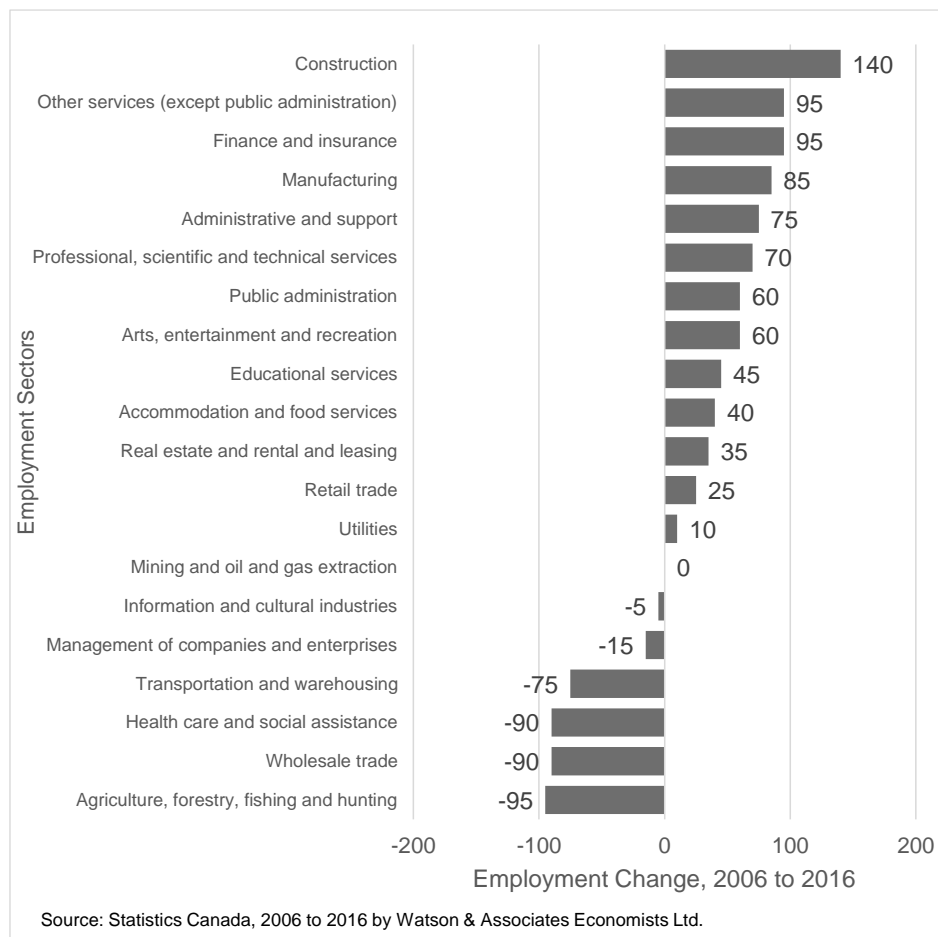
In many respects, economic growth potential in the Municipality of Middlesex Centre is largely tied to the success of the broader regional economy of southwestern Ontario. The Municipality has benefitted from the strong demand for housing within the London C.M.A. and its employment base has grown at the same pace as its population, with approximately 1 job for every 3 residents since 2001. The Municipality’s share of employment within Middlesex County has increased from 11% in 2001 to 21% in 2016.

Steady population growth across Middlesex Centre has also fueled steady growth in construction employment, as well as several population-related employment sectors, specifically finance and insurance; professional, scientific and technical services; entertainment and recreation; educational services; and public administration, as summarized in Figure 2. Within the export-based sectors, the Municipality has experienced growth in manufacturing over the past decade. To ensure long-term competitiveness, growth and diversity of Middlesex Centre’s economy, economic development, marketing, and investment efforts must be geared towards established



and emerging regional economic growth sectors while emphasizing the Municipality's strengths, unique attributes, and comparative advantages.

Figure 2
Municipality of Middlesex Centre
Employment Growth by Sector, 2001 to 2016



3.2 Location of Economic Activity within Middlesex Centre

Economic activity within Middlesex Centre is spread throughout the Municipality and is reflective of a municipality with a blend of rural and small urban centres. Economic activity is found within the following areas:

- Agricultural, rural and resource lands;
- Urban Settlement Areas (Ilderton and Komoka-Kilworth), accommodating the majority of population-related and employment land growth; and



- Community Settlement Areas (Arva and Delaware), accommodating a portion of population-related and employment land growth.

4. Regional Growth Drivers and Disruptors

4.1 COVID-19 Near-Term Economic Impacts

As previously discussed in the Municipality of Middlesex Centre Growth Management Discussion Paper, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on socio-economic conditions on a global scale. In addition to its local and broader impacts on the economy, COVID-19 is also anticipated to accelerate changes in work and commerce as a result of technological disruptions which were already in play prior to the pandemic. As such, enterprises will increasingly be required to rethink the way they conduct business with an increased emphasis on remote work enabled by technologies such as virtual private networks (V.P.N.s), virtual meetings, cloud technology and other remote work collaboration tools. These trends are anticipated to have a direct influence on commercial and industrial real estate needs over both the near and longer terms. In light of these anticipated trends, it is important that long-term employment forecasts adequately consider the manner in which these impacts are likely to impact the nature of employment by place of work and associated building space needs by sector.

4.2 Technological Change

According to the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship, over the next 10 to 20 years, 42% of the Canadian labour force is at high risk of being affected by automation, either through significant task restructuring or elimination. Jobs that are anticipated to be most highly impacted by automation are primarily within occupations that are administrative, routine, or oriented towards sales and service.



The Brookfield Institute report also notes that highly skilled occupations are expected to grow much more quickly than the rest of the labour force and are at a lower risk of being negatively affected by automation. This suggests that more highly skilled labour will be a significant driver of Canada's future economic growth. It is important to recognize that adoption of technology advancements will occur at a different pace across the Province.



Considerable research has recently been undertaken by institutions and consulting agencies to assess the potential impacts of artificial intelligence (A.I.) to businesses as well as its broader impacts to the global economy. A report prepared by PWC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) in 2017 identifies that the net impacts to global G.D.P. resulting from A.I. are anticipated to contribute up to \$15.7 trillion to the global economy in 2030, more than the current output of China and India combined.¹ The report also identifies that over the next decade, A.I. will generate massive disruption as both established businesses and new entrants drive innovation and develop new business models. While the long-term net economic impacts of automation and/or A.I. appear to be positive, global competition from both established and emerging markets looking to capitalize on potential opportunities related to this technology will be increasingly fierce. To prevent an undesirable, lose-lose scenario associated with anticipated technological change in the economy – talent shortages, unemployment, and growing inequality – several critical actions are needed. This includes businesses assuming an active role in supporting their existing workforce through reskilling and upskilling, individuals taking a proactive approach to their own lifelong learning, and governments creating an enabling environment to assist in these efforts.

4.3 Trends in Work at Home and Off-Site Employment

Over the 2001 to 2016 period, the percentage of Middlesex Centre labour force defined as having a usual place of work declined, offset by a gradual increase in the share of work at home employment and a steady increase in the share of off-site employment, also referred to as employees with no fixed place of work (N.F.P.O.W.).²

Within Middlesex County, the rising share of labour related to N.F.P.O.W. has been primarily driven by steady growth in the transportation and construction sectors which are typically characterized as having a higher percentage of off-site employees. Technological innovation and improved broadband regional telecommunications have been, and will continue to be, key drivers of economic expansion in knowledge-based

¹ Sizing the Prize. What's the real value of A.I. for your business and how can you capitalise? PWC. 2017.

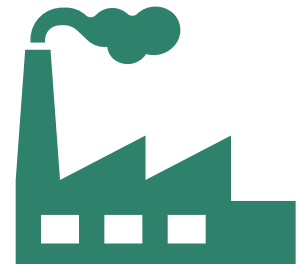
² Statistics Canada defines N.F.P.O.W. employees as “persons who do not go to the same workplace location at the beginning of each shift.” Such persons include landscape contractors, travelling salespersons, independent truck drivers, etc.



sectors as well as the steady rise of the gig economy.¹ Looking forward, continued advances in technology and telecommunications (e.g. 5G technology) are anticipated to further enable remote work patterns and ultimately increase the relative share of off-site employment over the long term. Over the coming decades, work at home and N.F.P.O.W. employment is generally expected to steadily increase as a result of these trends. Demographics and socio-economics also play a role in the future demand for off-site and work at home employment within an increasingly knowledge- and technology-driven economy. It is anticipated that many working residents in the County and the Municipality, particularly younger adults, as well as older adults (i.e. Baby Boomers) approaching retirement or semi-retirement, will utilize technology to allow them to supplement their income in more flexible ways in contrast to traditional work patterns.

4.4 Trends in Manufacturing

While the manufacturing sector still remains vital to the economy, the nature of manufacturing processes in North America has increasingly become more capital/technology intensive with a growing focus on automation associated with relatively lower labour requirements. Both globalization and technological advancement have driven this trend, leading to increased outsourcing of production to overseas manufacturers, particularly related to processes that are labour intensive. While there will continue to be a manufacturing focus in Ontario, the highly competitive nature of the manufacturing sector will require production to be increasingly cost effective and value-added oriented, which bodes well for firms that are specialized and capital/technology intensive.



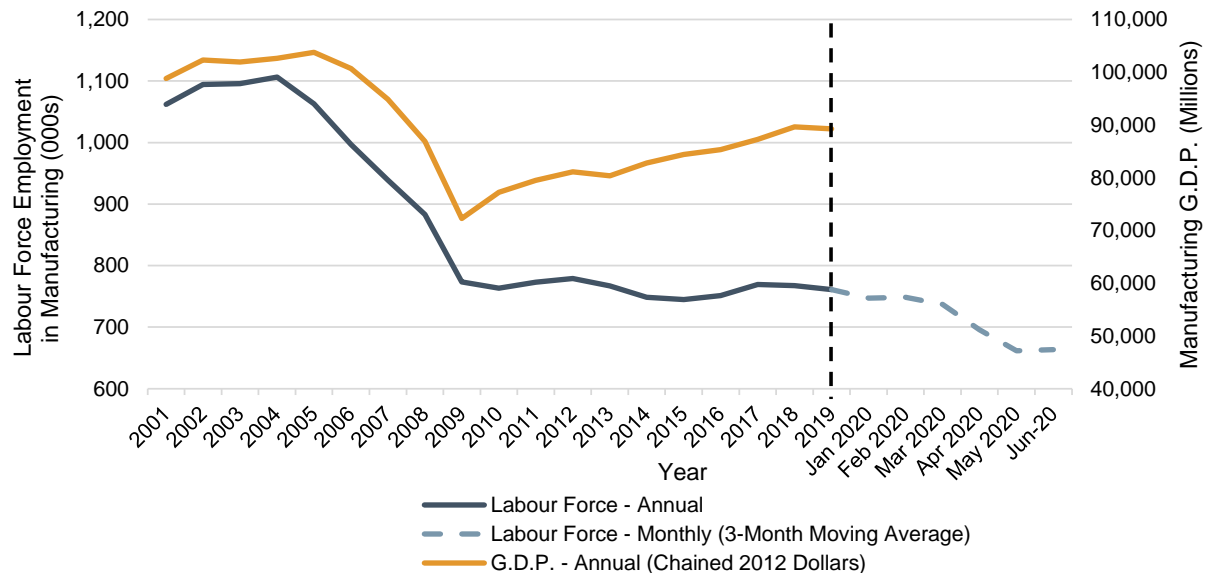
Between 2003 and 2010, these challenges were further exacerbated in the manufacturing sector across Ontario and Canada due to a high Canadian dollar relative to other world currencies, particularly the U.S. dollar. Since 2010, the manufacturing sector across Ontario including the Greater Golden Horseshoe (G.G.H.) has shown signs of a steady recovery in terms of economic output, measured through gross

¹ The gig economy is characterized by flexible, temporary, or freelance jobs, often involving connecting with clients or customers through an online platform.



domestic product (G.D.P.). While manufacturing job losses have generally stabilized since 2010, the manufacturing sector has not represented a large component of job growth across Ontario in recent years (refer to Figure 3).

Figure 3
Province of Ontario
Manufacturing Labour Force and G.D.P. Output



Source: Annual labour force data from Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, Table 282-0125, and monthly data from Table 14-10-0091-01. Annual G.D.P. data from Statistics Canada Table 36-10-0402-01, by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2020.

4.5 E-Commerce

E-commerce represents a major disruptor for the retail and logistics sectors. E-commerce sales in Canada have grown at a rate that is five times the pace of overall growth in retail trade. Online sales account for at least 6% of total Canadian retail spending. The rise of e-commerce has reduced the demand for retail square footage, in particular retail space for the sale of household goods. While e-commerce has been capturing market share from goods-based retailers,¹ growth in specific service-based retailers continues as they provide social experiences and other services that cannot be

¹ Goods-based retailer refers to retail facilities that sell goods to be used or consumed at home, including food-oriented retail (supermarkets and convenience stores), beer, wine and liquor stores, pharmacies and personal care stores, home improvement stores and stores selling general merchandise, apparel, and furniture.



purchased remotely. Service-based retailers¹ typically have smaller footprints than goods-based retailers and, therefore, offer greater flexibility for intensification areas. In addition, service-based retailers are driving the intensification of power centre and shopping centre sites across Canada by adding retail space to parking lots (pad sites) and occupying vacant retail space previously utilized by goods-based retailers.

Increasing growth in e-commerce is also having a significant impact on employment growth and land demand related to the logistics sector. Delivery expectations within this sector are increasing on an annual basis. As delivery times decrease, it is anticipated that demand for regional fulfilment centres will increase. Further, it is estimated that 25% to 30% of online merchandise is returned which is also driving the need for reverse logistics and return centres.

4.6 Anticipating Further Needs in the Logistics Sector

Structural changes occurring in the global economy, combined with technological disruption, are also influencing demand for new consolidated, land-extensive warehousing facilities to store and manage the distribution of goods produced locally as well as goods imported from abroad. This continues to drive demand for increasingly larger, more land-extensive warehousing facilities, generally located in greenfield Employment Areas. Across North America, the logistics sector or “Goods Movement” sector is evolving at a rapid pace. For Middlesex County, a competitive cost environment (i.e. competitive non-residential property tax rates, utility costs and industrial land values), Highway 401 and Highway 402 access, and proximity to a number of large North American economic regions make this area a competitive location for the warehousing and distribution sector.

As previously mentioned, e-commerce and technological improvements represent the biggest drivers of change in the Goods Movement industry, powered by the rapid growth and advancements in mobile technology, automation, and autonomous trucking.

¹ Service-based retailer refers to retail establishments that primarily provide an on-site service or where goods are consumed on-site, including food services (e.g. restaurants and bars), personal care services (e.g. hair salon), commercial recreational uses (e.g. fitness centres and movie theatres) and automotive services.



5. Promoting Economic Growth, Competitiveness and Prosperity in Middlesex Centre

When considering the Municipality's regional competitive ranking, the Municipality has considerable control and ability to position itself in a positive manner. This requires the Municipality to continue marketing itself as a hub for innovation, equipped with the human capital that is required to encourage on-going innovation, entrepreneurship, small business development, and local investment retention.

It is recognized that Middlesex Centre increasingly competes directly for business attraction and investment with other communities within the regional market area and beyond. This is particularly true for "export-based" industrial sectors which are typically accommodated within the Municipality's Employment Areas (industrial areas). A major factor influencing the future competitiveness of the Municipality's economic base is the structure and quality of its Employment Areas. Employment Areas (industrial lands) typically include a broad range of light, medium, and heavy industrial lands, business parks, and rural industrial lands. Employment lands accommodate primarily export-based employment sectors, including a wide range of industrial uses (e.g. manufacturing, distribution/logistics, transportation services), as well as specific commercial and institutional uses (e.g. office, service, ancillary/accessory retail) which generally support the industrial/business function of the Municipality's Employment Areas.

In order for Middlesex Centre to continue to be competitive and attractive to a broad range of industrial and commercial sectors, the Municipality needs to ensure that it offers a sufficient supply and market choice of municipally serviced employment lands. Most notably, this should include a diverse supply of sites in terms of location and size (e.g. ranging from 1 hectare up to 25 hectares) with good transportation access and proximity to major highway interchanges as well as other local/regional transportation infrastructure.



5.1 Promoting the Municipality's Village Centres and Settlement Commercial Areas

Middlesex Centre is characterized by a blend of expansive rural lands, villages, and hamlets, as well as secondary and primary settlement areas. At a County level, under the County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategic Plan, the region's downtowns and village centres are to be promoted for business, investment, and visitors.¹



The Middlesex Centre O.P. recognizes the village centres within the Municipality as the primary centres for business activity and gathering places within the County. Economically vibrant main streets help attract visitors, create jobs, and increase the competitiveness of small businesses, which are the backbone to Middlesex Centre's economy. As previously mentioned, these areas are also recognized as important cultural heritage landscapes as they include a concentration of important historic sites and other built cultural heritage resources. Mixed-use activities are encouraged in the Municipality's village centres and settlement commercial areas.

5.2 Focus on Tourism

The Middlesex County 2014 Economic Development Strategy stated tourism as one of four key focus areas and strategic themes in the Municipality's economy.² Tourism Middlesex is the organization mandated with ensuring that Middlesex County is a recognized destination that attracts and provides visitors with a value-added tourism experience. It also works with the Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation (S.W.O.T.C.) in areas such as tourism marketing, tourism workforce development, tourism product development and investment attraction. The County as a whole has started to focus on community-based tourism with particular emphasis on Farm and Eco Tourism.



¹ County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategic Plan prepared by MDB Insights, January 2014.

² Ibid.



5.3 Promoting the County's and Municipality's Agricultural Industry

Home to approximately 48,000 hectares of agricultural lands and 500 farms, the Municipality of Middlesex Centre represents a significant resource for agricultural activities. On a County level, there are 2,335 farms spanning over two hundred thousand hectares of agricultural lands. Middlesex County's agriculture sector contributed a total of 3,735 jobs to the local economy in 2016.¹ Of these total jobs, 33% were year-round,



full time positions.² Agri-business and food processing provide an opportunity to deepen agricultural activity and increase productivity of the industry by providing value-added products (potential tourism driver) and services. It is one of the key planning principles for the Municipality to promote and protect the predominately agricultural character and economy of the Municipality by ensuring the continued viability of agricultural resource areas, the agricultural industry, and agricultural communities in the Municipality. Middlesex Centre has some of the richest agricultural lands in southwestern Ontario, and a wide range of crops are grown making Middlesex County farms candidates for high value crops and value-added opportunities. The agriculture and agri-food system encompass several industries, including the farm input and service supplier industries, primary agriculture, food and beverage processing, food distribution, retail, wholesale, and food service industries, as well as other on-farm diversified uses.

5.4 Addressing Future Economic Opportunities and Challenges in Middlesex Centre

Despite the Municipality's local and economic strengths, Middlesex Centre faces several broader opportunities and challenges related to its future economic growth potential and prosperity. Many of these opportunities and challenges relate to macro-economic trends over which the Municipality has limited control. This includes the

¹ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Business website – profiles and data, retrieved online, September 28, 2020:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/stats/county/index.html>.

² Ibid.



relative strength of the global economy, international trade policy, and the competitiveness of the Canadian economic base relative to other established and emerging global markets.

Middlesex Centre also faces several economic opportunities and challenges due to structural changes that are occurring within the macro-economy. Although the County and the Municipality are more inclined towards agricultural and manufacturing sectors, similar to the Province as a whole, Middlesex County's economy is transitioning away from goods production and moving towards service delivery. Ultimately, this will continue to influence the manner in which the County and the Municipality plan for, and market, their non-residential areas.

6. Planning for Employment Areas and Mixed-Use Areas in Middlesex Centre

6.1 What are Employment Areas?

Employment Areas are defined as lands designated in an O.P. for clusters of business and economic activities including, but not limited to, manufacturing, warehousing, offices, and associated retail and ancillary facilities. Typically, these areas accommodate export-based activities that cannot be accommodated elsewhere in the Municipality due to the need for buffering from other uses. In Middlesex Centre, Employment Areas are primarily comprised of industrial uses and are intended to be developed for light, heavy, and prestige industrial uses, limited service commercial uses, and related uses.

6.2 Where are Employment Areas Located?

Generally, Employment Areas within Middlesex Centre are identified within the urban and community settlement areas of Ilderton, Komoka-Kilworth, Arva, and Delaware. Employment Areas within urban settlement areas have full municipal services (water and wastewater), while Employment Areas within community settlement areas have private servicing (no municipal water and wastewater servicing).



6.3 Why are Employment Areas Important to the Local Economy of Middlesex Centre?

Employment Areas form an important component of Middlesex Centre's land-use structure and are an integral part of the local economic development potential of the economic region. They are also home to many of the Municipality's largest private-sector employers. Through development of its industrial land base, the Municipality is better positioned to build more balanced, complete, and competitive communities. Development typically accommodated on employment lands generates relatively strong economic spin-off effects that benefit Middlesex Centre directly and indirectly. In addition, employment lands development typically generates high-quality employment opportunities which can improve local socio-economic conditions (i.e. live/work opportunities). Furthermore, achieving non-residential growth adds to the Municipality's assessment base, which can help support competitive property taxes and stronger municipal service levels. Industrial land development also tends to produce more positive net fiscal benefits for the community than other types of development (e.g. residential and retail). Thus, a healthy balance between residential and non-residential development is considered an important policy objective for Middlesex Centre. In contrast to other urban land uses (e.g. commercial and mixed-use areas), employment lands provide an opportunity to accommodate industrial employment sectors that cannot be easily accommodated in other areas of the Municipality.

As previously mentioned, structural changes in the broader economy are altering the nature of economic activities on employment lands and impacting the built form and character of these lands. It is also important to recognize that tomorrow's industries have siting, space, and built-form requirements that are fundamentally different from traditional industrial sites that exist today. This may include requirements related to broad infrastructure, transit access, energy efficiency, building and urban design standards, eco-industrial design principles, and labour force access. Site configuration and integration of uses is also evolving, particularly in prestige Employment Areas which often integrate operations combining office, research and development, warehousing and logistics, and on-site manufacturing in a "campus-style" setting.

With an increasing emphasis on "knowledge-based sectors," major office, flex office and multi-purpose facilities encompassing office and non-office uses are becoming an increasingly dominant built form. Recognizing these recent structural changes in the



regional economy, there has been a shift in planning philosophy that calls for developing Employment Areas to provide for a wider range of amenities and employment-supportive uses that complement both knowledge-based and traditional industrial sectors.

6.4 Conversions of Lands within Employment Areas

As part of the municipal comprehensive review (M.C.R.) process, Middlesex Centre will be reviewing all designated Employment Areas to ensure that the lands meet the objectives of supporting local economic growth opportunities under the provincial policy framework. In some cases, a conversion of a site from Employment Area to non-Employment Area may be appropriate. Given the importance of the Municipality's Employment Areas with respect to local economic and employment growth potential, Middlesex Centre will comprehensively review Employment Area conversion requests within the framework of the M.C.R. process.

7. Planning for an Increasingly Diversified Economy in the Municipality of Middlesex Centre

A key objective of the County's 2014 Economic Development Strategic Plan is to support and foster a diversifying economy.¹ To accommodate the steady growth of the County-wide and local municipal economic base, land-use planning policies must anticipate the evolving nature of the regional economy and be responsive to the diverse needs of industry and businesses of all types and sizes over the long term. These policies must also offer a degree of flexibility and nimbleness that allows for relatively rapid responses to unforeseen changes, which can be a critical competitive advantage relative to competing markets.

This discussion paper explores several fundamental opportunities and challenges that Middlesex Centre is anticipated to face over the next 20 years and beyond. Below is a summary of some of the questions that Middlesex Centre will be required to consider through this O.P. review. These questions include, but are not limited to the following:

¹ Middlesex County Economic Development Strategic Plan 2014



- What policy changes/enhancements are required to strengthen the Municipality's ability to accommodate employment uses/sectors associated with structural changes in an evolving economy?
- Do current O.P. policies work together with Council's economic development initiatives to support Middlesex Centre's overall economic competitiveness and growth objectives?
- Are the Municipality's employment and economic O.P. policies favourable when compared to competing municipalities in the surrounding area?
- What additional planning policies, tools, and incentives (if any) should be explored and potentially introduced to support the development of the Municipality's non-residential areas, including commercial areas, employment areas, rural areas, and agricultural lands?
- Is the location and configuration of available, serviced and/or serviceable employment lands sufficient and appropriate to accommodate employment uses across the range of targeted industrial and office commercial sectors?
- What opportunities exist for diversification of non-agricultural activities on the Municipality's agricultural lands? What policies would be required to encourage other activities on agricultural lands?
- Are current policies sufficient to protect and retain existing employment uses that are only permitted in Employment Areas?