

NORFOLK COUNTY IN 2026 *a scenario*

Norfolk County



WE CAN'T SEE THE FUTURE. BUT WE CAN PLAN FOR IT AND TRY TO SHAPE IT.





Norfolk County

We can't see into the future. However, by looking at trends, what we know about the past and present and by mixing in our dreams, we can do our best to shape it. Based on the ideas and images collected from hundreds of Norfolk residents during the preparation of the County's first Official Plan, this is a picture of how the County might look and feel twenty or so years from now. It represents a 'big picture look ahead' - something to aim for. The foundation of the vision is constructed from the things that people said they most value during the three stages of community input sessions. In the vision, it is imagined that many of today's issues are resolved, and the County has continued to evolve and change for the better. Some creative licence has been taken to advance some of the ideas and concepts. Many of the specific events, facilities and other changes are offered as illustrations of what could be. It is not intended that everything in the vision must or will become reality. At best, it is a vision, and in some cases a hope of what the future could hold for Norfolk County.





dream about the possibilities...



NORFOLK COUNTY STRIVES TO BALANCE A COMMITMENT TO THE LAND AND EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

It's the year 2026 and twenty-five years since the Regional Municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk was dissolved and Norfolk County was reborn as a single-tier municipality.

Over the past twenty-five years, community leaders have been hard at work uniting the County under the Norfolk banner. Although there has not always been agreement among the many strong perspectives that are deeply rooted in this varied community, we have found a way for everyone to call Norfolk County 'home'.

What is remarkable is the way that the County and all of the individual communities, along with the wide range of interests, have found common ground and stayed true to the values and dreams that were clearly expressed in the early years of the municipality. A magnet for many of those ideas was the crafting of the County's first Official Plan, which was approved in 2005.

At that time, the community was widely consulted about what they value, the crucial issues to tackle and their dreams and aspirations for the County as they looked ahead to this twenty-fifth birthday.

This County of approximately 65,000 permanent and 5,000 seasonal residents is blessed with many assets. Among the most cherished are the lifestyles, character and values afforded by picturesque and thriving small towns, and a rural landscape, rich in a broadly based agricultural economy. Also high on the list is the wide diversity of natural heritage features, some of world-class quality. Not to be overlooked is the appeal of the Lake Erie shoreline with its superb natural assets and carefully located settlement areas and tourist destinations that have been developed in harmony with the natural environment.

The most supported principle that emerged from the consultations for the 2005 Official Plan was 'the need for balance' - balancing economic development, job/wealth creation and population growth with the strong desire to protect and sustain the quality of the natural environment and the small town and rural lifestyle that is so widely cherished.





finding common ground



balancing

A STRONGER, MORE DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY

The economy has become stronger through greater diversification and growth in all sectors.

An increased emphasis on economic development, led by a well conceived and implemented economic development and tourism strategy has paid off, leading to a stronger industrial sector based on local resources and new technologies. The Trackless Vehicle Ltd. operation in Courtland served as a catalyst for industrial expansion in the area. There are more jobs and a broader range of employment opportunities, including positions in advertising, communications, technology, lifestyle businesses, and the hospitality and tourism industry. In addition to attracting new businesses, the community has worked hard to retain and help expand established businesses. Incentives are offered for exemplary land use and resource management practices. The development of prestige business parks has helped to attract and more easily service new businesses. The east-west Highway 3 corridor has proved to be invaluable asset in marketing the County as a core industrial area in southwestern Ontario.

The County has now become much more of a tourist destination. A continued commitment to building the hospitality industry has resulted in more

country inns, bed and breakfast establishments, lakefront resorts and restaurants. This has translated into an increasing number of visitors staying longer to enjoy the comfortable lifestyle and take in the many attractions. Enhanced natural heritage resources and increased promotion is supporting a growing eco-tourism sector – one of the key factors in the County's diversified economic development strategy. A paved multi-use pedestrian and cycling lakeshore trail has been developed between Port Rowan and Port Dover.

Ongoing tourism planning has identified the most suitable development opportunities and locations, attracted increased investment and helped to advance the existing industry. Increasing priority has been placed on marketing the County tourism industry. Essential elements of the marketing program include themed signage and an effective 'branding' program to provide a memorable identity for the area.

Although many visitors continue to be drawn to the lakeshore, other areas in the County have become increasingly appealing. Inland areas offer beautiful heritage towns, unique agricultural landscapes, cultural and seasonal festivals, fine country inns and restaurants, a vibrant arts community, and great natural areas to explore. Expanded arts and culture opportunities, including a concert hall, appeal to visitors and local residents alike. Increasing interest in museums has



Opportunities

led to the expansion of regional museums and the establishment of a national museum in Port Dover focusing on the Lake Erie maritime industry and local and Atlantic shipwreck artifacts.

Waterford has become the County's leading example of an area that offers a true healthy community – active living opportunities are available through organized community recreation programs. A strong social support system is maintained by individuals willing to stay involved in local activities. Loyalty to local services and businesses provides local convenience.

The agricultural sector is stronger and has become much more diverse. Value-added farm industries continue to play an important role in the County's economic success. The Cider Keg and Kernal Peanuts Ltd. are excellent examples of these industries.

The County remains a leader in crop production and environmentally-friendly farming. Businesses such as greenhouses, equestrian facilities, kennels, nurseries, grain handling facilities, machine shops and welding shops compliment active farming activities in the rural area. Along the lakeshore, the Lake Erie commercial and sport fishing industry has been strengthened and both have been successfully woven into the tourism fabric of the County. The combined impact is job promotion and retention throughout the County.

The retail sector is stronger and reflective of community needs. County residents are committed to supporting local businesses and as a result, the retail sector caters better to the interests of all age groups and incomes. Included in the mix is a healthy supply of small, specialized and family-owned businesses and larger, more diversified chain stores. We have managed to reduce the sprawl of retail services.

Many underutilized properties have been redeveloped with thriving new industrial, commercial and retail uses, as well as urban parks and sites for community uses.

Strategies have been devised to reduce the exodus of young people from the community and to attract an increasing number back. One element of that strategy has been the improvements made to post-secondary education opportunities in the area. Courses through Fanshawe College and the Universities of Guelph, Western Ontario and McMaster are now available at several locations.

Growth in the economy and increased retention of population has resulted in a gradual increase in the rate of population growth. The retention of young people has helped to balance an aging population and improve the foundation for continued support systems to this segment of the population.



harmony with



THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS CRITICAL FOR THE FUTURE

High priority continues to be placed on protecting and improving the quality and biodiversity of the natural environment throughout the County.

The above average forest cover in Norfolk County continues to be seen as very important and great strides have been made by public agencies and private property owners to increase it and manage it well. Of particular interest are the large tracts of native Carolinian forest species. A successful incentive program was initiated to encourage conversion of large tracts of agricultural lands into forests.

The Long Point Biosphere remains a highly recognized international natural feature.

Norfolk County is a nature-lovers paradise and bird watching is second-to-none. Norfolk County residents embrace an active lifestyle. Residents and visitors enjoy outdoor recreation activities supported by the County's natural assets include canoeing, sailing, bass fishing, hiking, biking and hunting, to name a just a few.



Nature

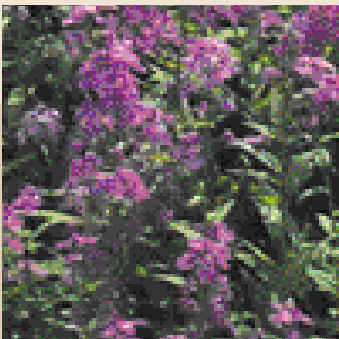


Programs are in place to help protect specific wildlife species that are at risk. There is sufficient, safe drinking water throughout the County, in part because the community has taken strong measures to protect groundwater sources over the past twenty-five years. Two examples of those measures include implementation of the Groundwater Study and Wellhead Protection Plan, and more extensive utilization of hydrological and hydrogeological studies associated with development planning.

In the past two decades, the quality of the streams, rivers and lakes, as well as the County's wetlands have been enhanced. The application of extensive scientific lake research and reduced pollution has resulted in improvements in water quality in Lake Erie. An effective buffer zone has been established to protect the bluffs along portions of the Lake Erie shoreline.

Through expanded recycling and reuse programs and innovations in waste management techniques, the amount of waste entering our landfill sites has been reduced by half over the past twenty years.

Although the influence continues to be great from beyond the County, significant strides have been made to improve air quality locally. One example includes use of alternative fuel technologies in County vehicles and many retrofitted



public buildings. These public initiatives have influenced an increasing number of industrial and retail businesses, as well as private citizens to follow suit. Pollution has been reduced and more 'green' industries have been attracted to the area.

The diversity of the County's natural landscape is a cherished asset - from the relatively level terrain, hedgerows and agricultural landscapes in the east to the more undulating topography to the west - from the varied shorelines, vistas and nautical character along the Lake Erie waterfront to the wide open spaces contrasted by the many expanses of forest cover and wetlands.

County residents are very proud of the network of open space and wildlife corridors throughout most of the County that link the core natural areas and many other natural areas and features as well. Some new greenway linkages have been created to tie natural areas together, complete vital loops and corridors, and help to increase habitat diversity and forest cover.

Also in place is a comprehensive network of multi-purpose recreational trails that share part of this natural system, but also utilize other linear corridors such as unused railway lines and quiet county roads. As most major roadways have been upgraded and new ones built, a parallel walking and cycling trail has been provided. Within urban areas, safe and attractive trail networks that



rural & small *Town*

utilize public parks, dedicated trail links, rights-of-way over private lands, and paved roadway shoulders continue to be developed. This linked network offers extensive opportunities to enjoy the unique natural attributes of the County while at the same time, promoting a healthy lifestyle through physical activity.

Lake Erie shoreline communities and lakefront recreation assets have been steadily enhanced and there has been some expansion. Over the past decade, steps have been taken to protect and expand the commercial and sport fishery. Over the years, quality public access to Lake Erie has been greatly increased through the provision of public parks and access points, both large and small. Increasingly, commercial and residential development is being designed to encourage public access along the lakeshore. Plans laid out over twenty years ago identified nodal areas to focus development, and to ensure quality, low profile development that is in harmony with the natural environment and does not block the public view of the lake. The new recreation-oriented developments have not only respected, but have benefited from the extensive natural and historic attributes of the lakeshore. The result is that today, a good deal of the Lake Erie shoreline remains available for public access and visible as a scenic natural landscape.

Along the waterfront and throughout the County, development balances economic opportunity and the intrinsic value of the natural environment.

Each year, increasing emphasis is placed on raising awareness about the value of the natural environment, the need to protect and improve it, and the steps that are being taken locally and elsewhere to make that happen.

THE RURAL AND SMALL TOWN CHARACTER OF THE COUNTY HAS BEEN MAINTAINED

In Norfolk County, there is strong support for rural and small town values and priorities.

Norfolk residents cherish many things about the County, including: the casual lifestyle, friendliness, the ease with which you get to know people, the many long time residents, the balance of ages and the diversity of people, the feeling of safety, low density housing, cleanliness, peace and quiet, no traffic, and the farmers markets. They also enjoy the wide open spaces and 'post card' landscapes. The County remains a great place to raise a family.





revitalized downtown cores



heritage &

The character and best attributes of each of the towns and hamlets throughout the County have been continually enhanced including revitalized downtown cores - an initiative that is crucial to their long term survival and sense of 'place'. An essential element of each community is their cultural and built heritage which is well understood and tenaciously protected. We celebrate the unique character and cultural roots of each town, hamlet and rural community through festivals and cultural events, local clubs and the special look and feel of each. The Summer Festival is a focal point of the lakeshore's summer season. The Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show held every October in Simcoe honours our historical ties to the land. Norfolk Arts Centre in Simcoe reflects our growing commitment to arts and culture. Spruce Row Museum in Waterford, Teeterville Pioneer Museum, Eva Brook Donly Museum and the Delhi Tobacco Museum and Heritage Centre all provide educational and recreational experiences based on the local history.

A strong sense of "knowing where we've come from" and respect for the heritage of our First Nations and first settlers lives on in the County.

We've worked diligently to protect the built heritage and unique cultural landscapes within our towns and throughout the countryside. Development projects are supportive of the County's traditional rural and small town character.

Increasingly, new development and redevelopment projects are taking their design cues from the historic past. Projects of which we are very proud include the Delhi Mill restoration and the Cannery Commons Condominiums redevelopment in Simcoe.

A well-supported message emerged out of the consultations with the community when the Official Plan was being developed. It centered on the need to define areas for urban development and areas for rural/agricultural land use. The 2005 Official Plan set out new policies that have focused most new residential development in existing towns and hamlets, which have become increasingly identifiable and vital communities unto themselves.

An important benefit of small town and rural living that we see in Norfolk is the strong network of volunteers that form the backbone of the community. These are essential resources for community groups, events and fund raising efforts.

In recognition of this crucial asset, a County-wide volunteer service was enhanced to link the efforts of all who utilize volunteers, to co-ordinate volunteer recruitment and retention, and to provide training and other support to grow and nurture this community resource. This on-going commitment



Culture



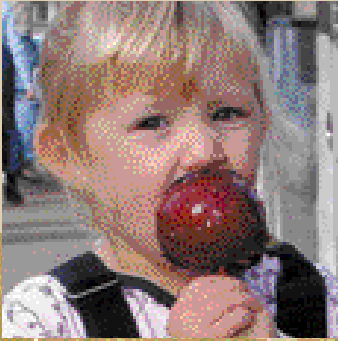
to grassroots community development is another reason why the County is considered to be a 'healthy community'.

Another asset of communities like Norfolk is the opportunity and willingness to work together in partnerships and other types of strategic alliances to optimize resources and to sometimes create the critical mass to get things done that would otherwise not be possible. One outstanding example is the collaboration that took place between both school boards, County parks and recreation services, the Library Board, several medical and rehabilitation practitioners, a church and a number of complimentary businesses to create a multi-purpose centre. Others who sometimes have worked at cross-purposes, have come together to co-ordinate, promote and provide a wide range of information, health, education, youth, and transportation services. The community's ability to work together has been particularly noticeable related to support for seniors – dubbing Norfolk County a 'senior friendly community'.

Norfolk County has also been able to establish itself as a unique and recognizable community.

THERE IS RESPECT FOR HERITAGE AND KNOWING WHERE WE'VE COME FROM.

quality of *Life*



HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

Maintenance of a high quality of life has been fundamental to the evolution of the County community. In Norfolk County, many things combine to define high quality of life.

The sense of community and togetherness has become stronger each year - sustained and advanced by a common feeling of community identity, pride and spirit; reinforced by the County's heritage, support for one another, and the values that are common to each of the small towns and rural communities. There is a strong sense of community stewardship, respect for one another, integrity, and a feeling of acceptance and inclusiveness. One of the ways that this is expressed is through the many festivals and fairs that happen throughout each year. Across the County, people enjoy getting together and celebrating the past, the present and the future.

Today, there is greater understanding and stronger support for disadvantaged residents. Community groups and organizations reflect the diversity of the populace and County Council and staff try to ensure that all groups are given equal opportunity to provide input into public processes.



The standard of living and overall quality of each community is high, with a desirable low cost of living and a much lower poverty level than at the turn of the century.

All communities throughout the County continue to be safe and secure with a low crime rate and watchful community. Emergency preparedness remains a high priority. Qualified staff are ready and equipped to respond to any situation and protect the health and safety of County residents.

Today, a wider variety of housing choices exists for all incomes and age groups throughout the County. A good deal of the current supply was made possible because of numerous joint efforts between government, business and the non-profit sector.

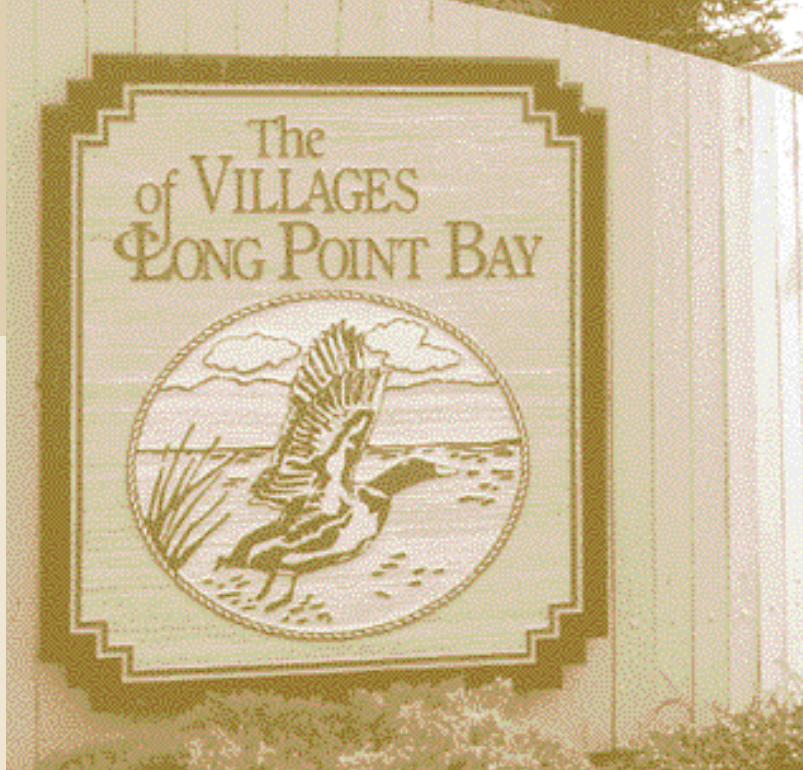
Educational opportunities have been enhanced in recent years, including a post-secondary satellite venue and excellent Internet resources. Unique college programs are offered to attract students from across the Province. The needs of young children and their parents are better understood today. A community-based centre for children was established which provides cultural, artistic, scientific and social programming, as well as resources for disadvantaged children. An increased understanding of the



social and economic value of community schools has breathed new life into many small, older schools. Public schools have once again become affordable for after-school use by the community.

Community culture and recreation assets have been appropriately consolidated, significantly enhanced and expanded to keep pace with changing demand. Although programs are available for all age groups, a lot of attention is paid to youth, as part of the county-wide 'Youth Retention Strategy'. Creative people have been attracted to the area, which is boosting its reputation as a 'hot bed' of arts and culture, including the creative arts, music, and theatre. Most public recreation assets have been focused on meeting the wide range of local community needs. There have also been improvements to library resources throughout the County.

Access within the County is excellent, and the proximity and ease of access by road and transit to nearby larger centres has been improved. One of the benefits of living in Norfolk County is that you can easily get to large centres like Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo and London for employment, shopping, specialized health care and leisure, without being too close such that they would influence Norfolk. However, we recognize that there is a point where easy access to larger centres can begin to work against the very values that we are trying to protect.



Growth

THE COUNTY'S CRUCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE HAS BEEN UPGRADED AND EXPANDED

Over past twenty-five years, the County's aging infrastructure has been systematically upgraded. In addition, new roads, bridges, waste management facilities, water systems, telecommunication networks and community facilities have been added. Part of that expansion has included improved links to the main Provincial highway system. In particular, the highway link to the Hamilton area has been improved and made less confusing. As introduced earlier, an essential component of the transportation network has been the expansion of pedestrian and cycling trails included along an increasing number of roadway corridors.

To protect the integrity and quality of life of urban areas, road systems are designed to address high volume traffic loads. Provincial highway corridors are the top priority.

Increased emphasis has been placed on public transportation within the County and between Norfolk and major urban centres, including major airports. Federal and provincial incentives were provided for this initiative to help meet the Kyoto Accord targets. A Lake Erie ferry service



The availability of quality health care, including specialized services has continually increased. We worked hard to establish medical centres that include a small teaching function.

The older adult population has doubled in size as the Baby Boom generation has aged and a steadily increasing number of people have sought out Norfolk County as a very desirable place to retire. Fortunately, there has been strong support for the County's older adult population through improved health, home care, social/recreation, education and related services and facilities, as well as improvements in housing, long term care facilities and transportation. Seniors feel welcome and supported in Norfolk.

& development



from Port Dover to Erie, Pennsylvania has been established as a cost-effective 'route' to the United States. Plans are in the works to build a regional airport to assist economic development.

In addition to tourist signage, significant improvement has been made to general directional signs into and throughout the County.

THE COUNTY IS WELL GOVERNED, WELL PLANNED AND SUSTAINABLE

The County has plans and policies in place to effectively direct orderly growth and shape the structure of the community. Other planning tools such as strategic business plans for agriculture and tourism and secondary plans for downtowns and the waterfront have been developed to provide necessary detail to implement the Official Plan. Regular and widespread consultation with stakeholders and residents ensures that plans and policies reflect widely held and constantly evolving community values and objectives. The uniqueness and assets of each part of the County are recognized and supported.

Consistency in planning and development policies across the County was achieved through the 2005 Official Plan. This also has led to more efficiency

in land use decisions. Good planning and a responsive government has resulted in equal opportunity for all areas of the County.

Municipal government has remained open, responsive and forward-thinking.

Regular partnering with adjacent municipalities has assisted all parties in reaching their objectives. One example is the reciprocal agreements to maintain roads along our mutual boundaries.

A broader, more balanced tax base, overall increased assessment, new municipal revenue sources and powers, coupled with increased efficiency has combined to create a municipality that is financially sustainable.

NORFOLK COUNTY - STRONGER THAN EVER

We've come a long way in the past twenty-five years - carefully building upon our great tradition and a strong sense of community and place. We've not stood still. The refreshing and in some cases innovative changes we see have tapped into the possibilities we dreamed of and addressed crucial issues, while at the same time remaining true to the things we value.



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