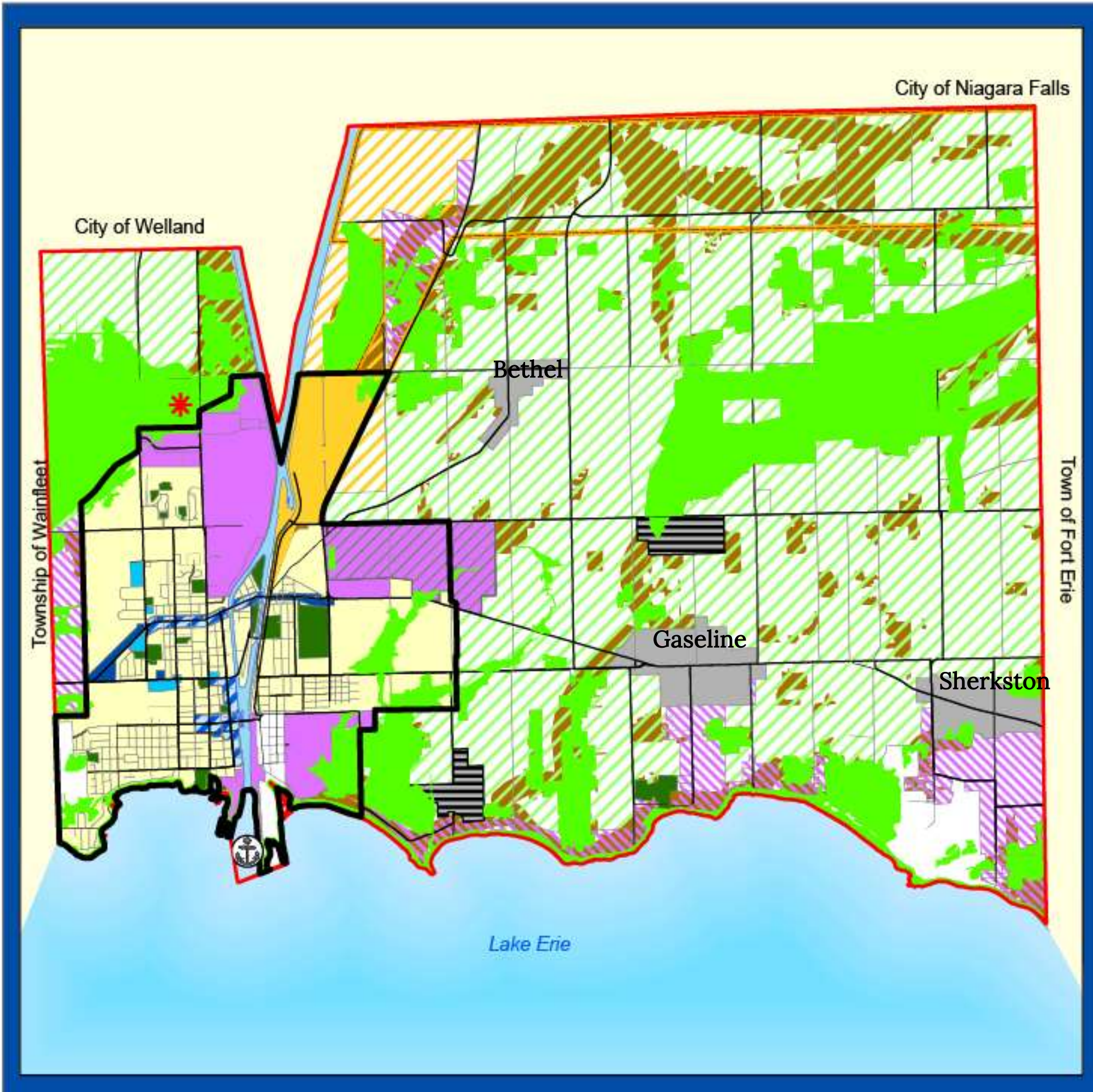


# PORT COLBORNE 2056: OUR NEW OFFICIAL PLAN

Port Colborne is growing, and we need a new roadmap to guide change while building on what we love about our city. Our Official Plan is the primary tool used to guide land use and development over the long term—specifically how, where, and at what pace we will grow, from now until 2056.

## CURRENT LAND USE PLAN



Our current Official Plan was approved in 2013. Since then, the Province has introduced major policy changes to address the housing crisis and streamline approvals.

### WHAT HAS CHANGED?



**New Rules:** We must align with the new Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 and recent legislation like the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* (Bill 23).



**New Authority:** The Region of Niagara is no longer the approval authority for local planning. The City of Port Colborne now prepares and implements its own Official Plan, with final approval by the Province.



**New Horizon:** Our current Official Plan is outdated, and this initiative allows us to plan for Port Colborne's long-term future through 2056.

## WHY DO WE NEED AN OFFICIAL PLAN?

Our Official Plan is an important decision-making tool that helps to:

- ✓ Guide future development of housing, industry, and commercial areas
- ✓ Protect our natural heritage systems and preserve our prime agricultural areas
- ✓ Attract future investment into the community
- ✓ Identify where and when we need to plan for future water, sewer, parks, and community facilities
- ✓ Provide direction to other important municipal tools, such as our Zoning By-law, Development Charges, and various master plans



# OUR VISION



## WHAT WE'VE HEARD SO FAR

As part of our early engagement in 2024, residents shared their top priorities. Here's what we heard from the community:

### Top five priorities:

- Enhancing and expanding our green spaces and parks
- Protecting source water
- Managing our growth by planning for infrastructure and utilities
- Promoting economic growth and tourism
- Preserving and enhancing community design

### Other key priorities (not in order):

- Providing diverse and affordable housing options—row houses, townhomes, and multi-unit housing like mid- and high-rise apartments, etc.
- Preserving agricultural land
- Planning for climate change
- Growing our local economy

Resident feedback helped shape the following Vision Statement for the New Official Plan:

## VISION STATEMENT



“ Port Colborne is a thriving, vibrant, and diverse rural and urban lakefront community that is rooted in our cultural heritage and the natural landscapes of Lake Erie. Our community is welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to all ages and abilities.

We work together to build a community that is walkable with a thriving downtown, complete streets, and varied and affordable housing options, while protecting our farmland and natural heritage features.

Inspired by our commitment to maintain proper infrastructure, we also plan for expansive parks, green spaces, and community gathering spaces ensuring a healthy community for current and future generations. We have places to work and promote economic development, tourism, and arts and culture that support our community. Port Colborne is a growing community, and our Official Plan creates a strong foundation to support future growth.”

## BUILDING OUR FUTURE

What is the one thing Port Colborne needs to achieve this Vision?



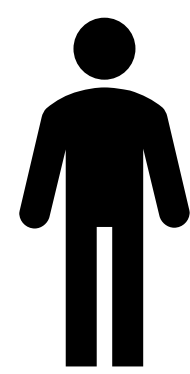
*Use a sticky note to tell us what you think.*



# PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Port Colborne is growing. The City and Niagara Region are making strategic investments in new public infrastructure to attract private sector development opportunities. Over the next 30 years, the City has the potential for significant population, housing, and employment growth.

## The 2056 Forecast:



~29,130  
Total Population  
↑ ~7,000 people



~ 12,735  
Total Homes  
↑ ~ 3,450 households



~ 10,200  
Total Jobs  
↑ ~ 3,000 jobs

## Policy Direction: Where and How Should We Grow?

The Province directs municipalities to focus most growth within settlement area boundaries, where existing and planned infrastructure are available. We have enough designated land within our existing boundary to meet our 2056 housing needs. **We are directing residential growth within the urban boundary to the following areas:**



### Strategic Growth Nodes,

which are key areas like Downtown and the lands along the Canal that are well-suited for intensification and mixed-use development in walking distance to services;



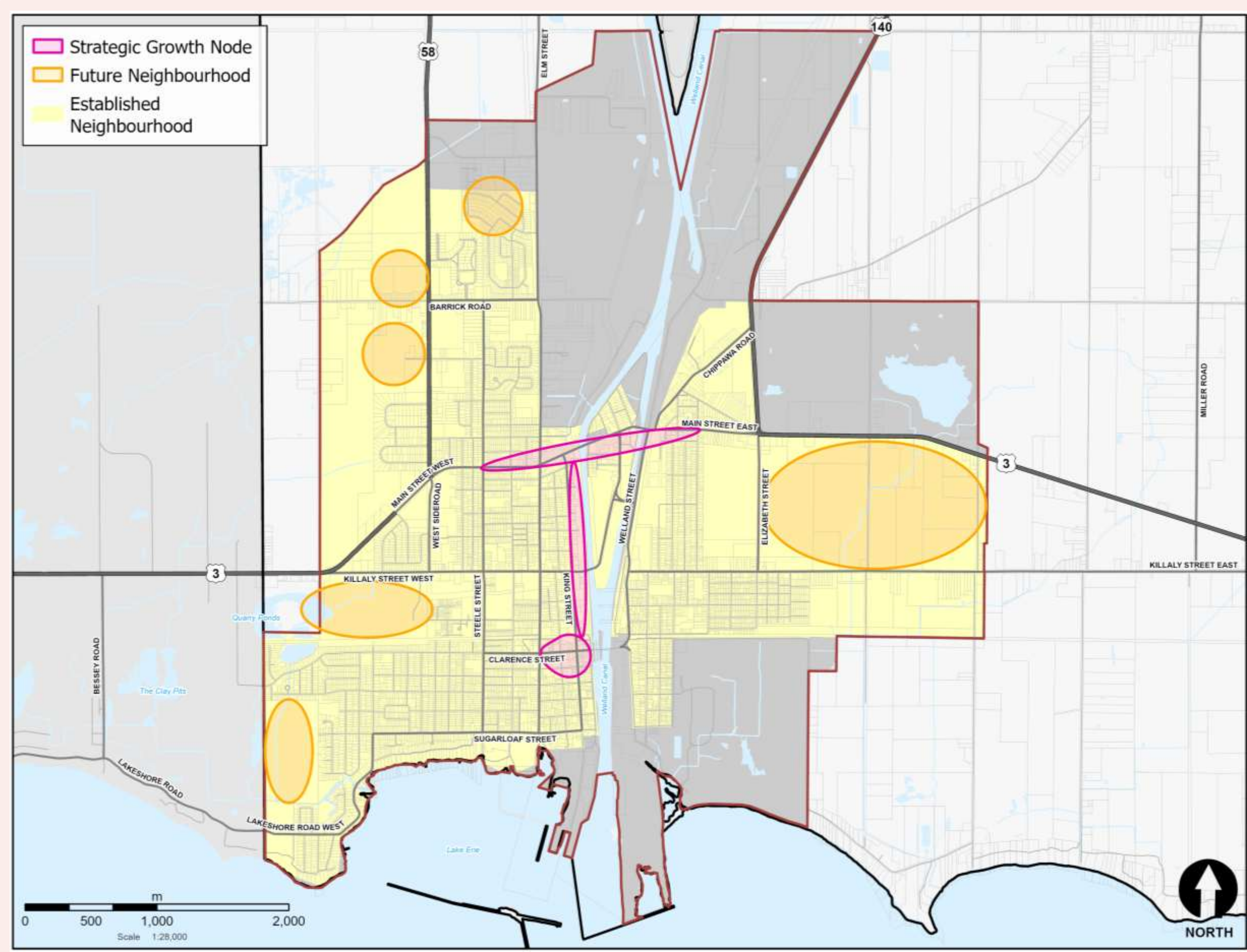
### Established Neighbourhoods,

which are stable residential areas where we protect the character while allowing for "gentle" evolution (like an additional residential unit in our backyard); and,



### Future Neighbourhoods,

which are designated greenfield areas (i.e., vacant lands designated for growth) at the urban edge where we will build new, complete communities.



The Official Plan will identify different functions for each of the above-noted areas. Place a sticky note on the map to tell us:



- Do the locations of these 'Growth Nodes' make sense to you?
- What 'vibe' or character do you want to see in the new 'Future Neighbourhoods'?
- Which established areas need the most protection?





# MORE HOMES, MORE CHOICES

We are looking to create diverse housing options for everyone: for example, older adults downsizing, young families starting out, and new workers in our community.

## NEW PROVINCIAL & CITY RULES

Provincial housing rules have changed to accelerate home building. To align with these changes, the City has already updated our planning rules to allow:

- Urban Areas: Up to 4 units per lot.
- Hamlets & Rural Areas: Up to 3 units per lot.
- Agricultural Areas: Up to 2 units per lot.

## CHANGES TO DESIGN REVIEW

Provincial legislation now exempts developments with **10 units or fewer** from Site Plan Control. This means that the City cannot review the detailed site design (like specific landscaping or lighting details) for these smaller projects.

## THE ROLE OF THE NEW OFFICIAL PLAN

Since we know that our neighbourhoods will evolve and grow, we need to be strategic in how we plan for this growth:

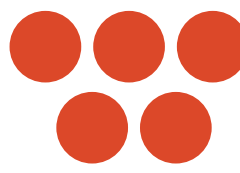
The New Official Plan **CAN**:

- ☒ Identify where different housing forms are appropriate;
- ☒ Provide direction on transitions in building scale (e.g., height step-backs);
- ☒ Support connected, walkable neighbourhoods; and
- ☒ Guide updates to the Zoning By-law.

The New Official Plan **CANNOT**:

- ☒ Limit the number of additional units required by the Province;
- ☒ Apply Site Plan Control to projects with 10 units or fewer;
- ☒ Regulate architectural style or fine-grained design details; and
- ☒ Keep neighbourhoods completely unchanged.

As Port Colborne grows, what should we consider when planning how new homes fit into existing neighbourhoods? Please place a dot next to your top priorities.



Where road, water, and sewer capacity can support new housing.	
How to manage height and size transitions between different areas.	
How buildings should face the street for clarity and safety.	
How to support safe walking and travel options.	
Where stormwater and green features can be added or improved.	
How to keep the street and block network connected over time.	
How to ensure that there is space for trees and gardens.	
How to keep driveways and garages from dominating the view.	



Anything not listed above? Please add a sticky note and tell us:  
What else should we consider, and why is it important to you?





# GROWING A VIBRANT ECONOMY

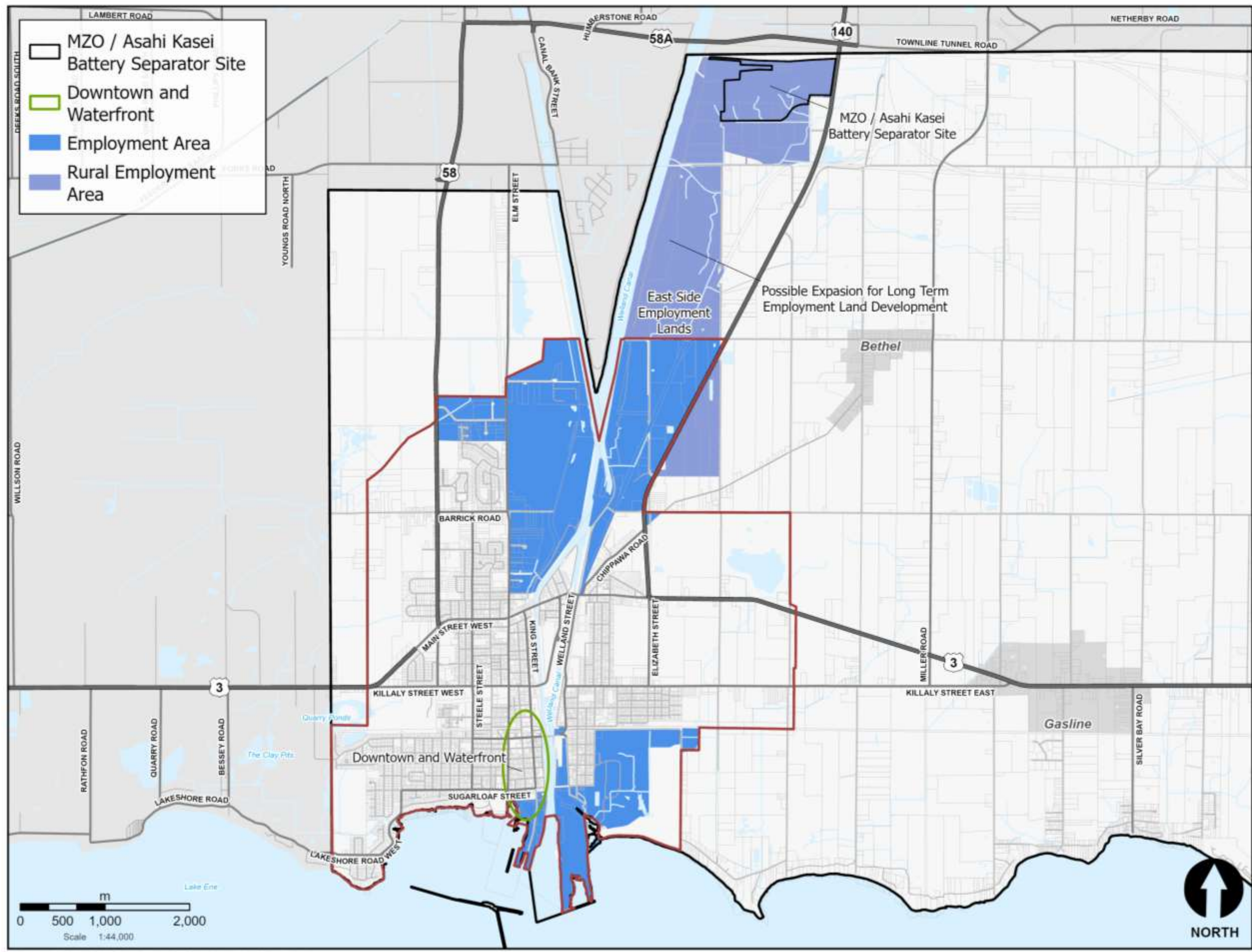
We are planning for major investments to support our local economy. The Province defines "Employment Areas" as lands for manufacturing, warehousing and logistics and directs municipalities to protect these lands for such uses.

## POLICY DIRECTION: Strategic Expansion of Employment Areas

There is an opportunity to identify additional employment areas through the Official Plan process. The City can consider a strategic expansion of the urban boundary to the north along the Welland Canal, to promote additional employment land and economic development opportunities north of the east side lands. This would connect the new Asahi Kasei battery plant with our existing industrial lands, which would help to create a unified economic corridor.

## OUR ECONOMIC ENGINES:

- 1. **East Side Employment Lands:** With support from Niagara Region, we are unlocking approximately 1,000 acres of industrial land. New water and wastewater infrastructure is being built to support this growth.
- 2. **The Welland Canal:** The Canal is a key feature of Niagara Region's Core Employment Areas and a major economic driver, supporting shipping, logistics, and marine businesses. This area must be protected for industrial use.
- 3. **Downtown & Waterfront:** While not "Employment Areas" by the Provincial definition, these are the hubs for our tourism, shops, restaurants, and local services.

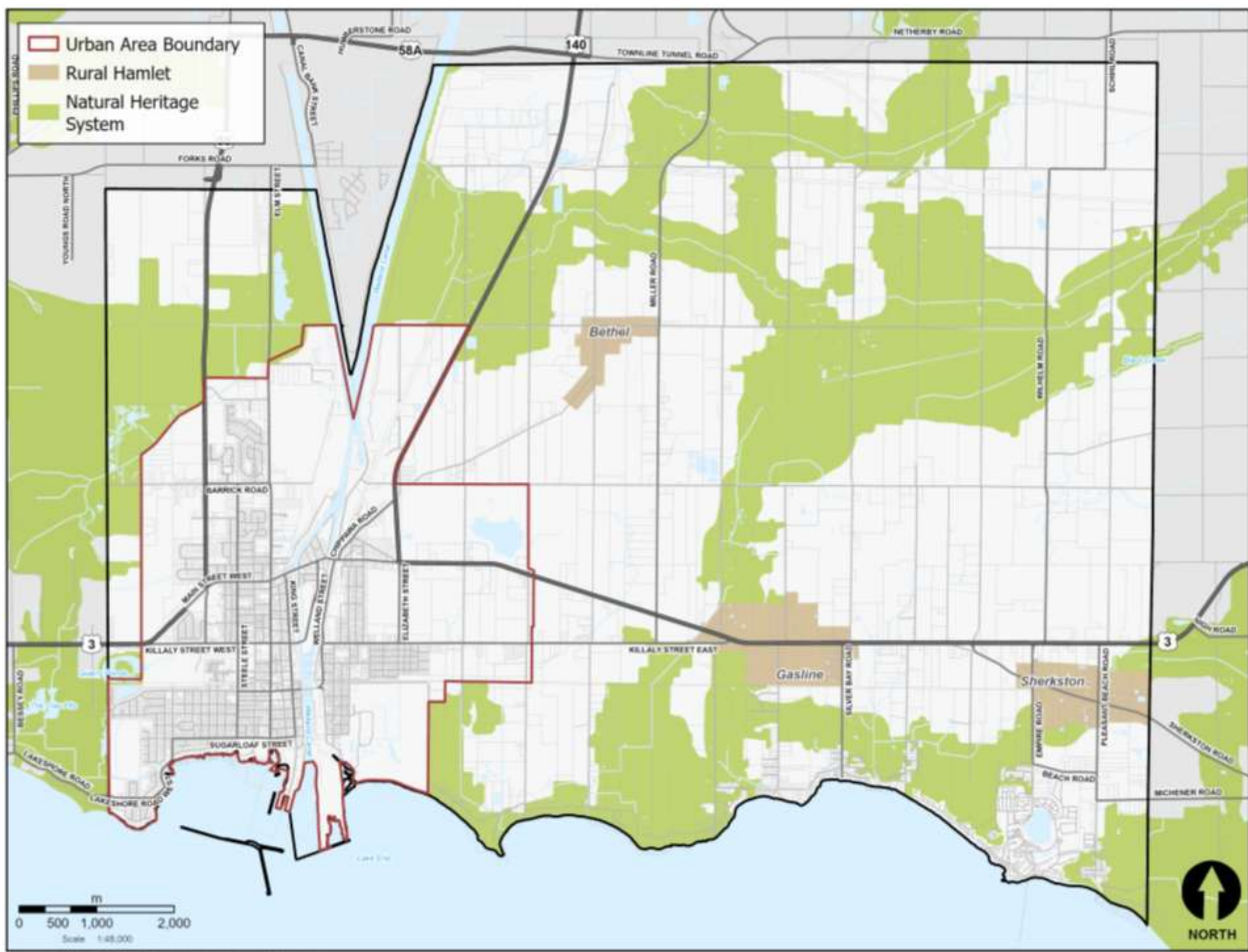


What else should the City do to support additional economic development in Port Colborne?





# PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT



## PROVINCIAL DIRECTION

We are required to identify and protect our **Natural Heritage System**. This includes significant wetlands, woodlands, and water features. We must also protect residents and property from natural hazards like flooding and erosion.



## A CONNECTED SYSTEM

We are moving away from protecting isolated "islands" of green. The New Official Plan will adopt a Natural Environment System approach. This connects wetlands, forests, and watercourses into a linked system so that wildlife and water can move freely.



## PROTECTION MEASURES

To protect these features from the impacts of development, the New Official Plan will:

- **Require Buffers:** Establish mandatory setbacks between development and natural features.
- **Protect More Features:** Include protections for smaller woodlands and coastal wetlands that may not have been covered before.



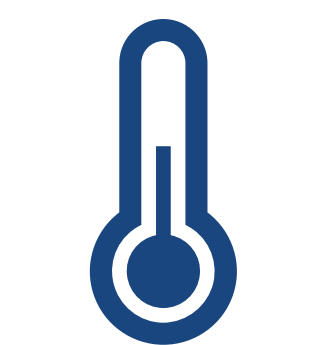
## CLEAN WATER

We are strictly protecting the Intake Protection Zones around our water treatment plant to ensure that our drinking water remains safe.



## CLIMATE-READY

We are planning for a changing climate. This means using Green Infrastructure—such as rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable pavement—to manage stormwater naturally and reduce flood risks.



The Province sets the baseline for protecting our wetlands and woodlands. Beyond these features, please use a sticky note and tell us what other environmental improvements (e.g., more street trees, shoreline restoration) would you like to see?

- Greening our neighbourhoods (Urban forestry and bringing nature into the city).
- Water and Shoreline Enhancement (Going beyond protection to restoration and access).
- Climate Comfort and Safety (Adaptation measures for heat and flooding).
- Wildlife and Connections (Local biodiversity and safe passage).
- Private Land Stewardship (Encouraging residents to act on their own property).



# SUPPORTING OUR FARMS AND RURAL COMMUNITY

Most of Port Colborne (64%) is agricultural land. It is also home to our historic Hamlets: Bethel, Gasline, and Sherkston.

## PROTECTING FARMLAND

We are adopting an **Agricultural Systems Approach**. This means that we protect the prime agricultural soil for farming and support the entire network of services that farmers need to succeed.

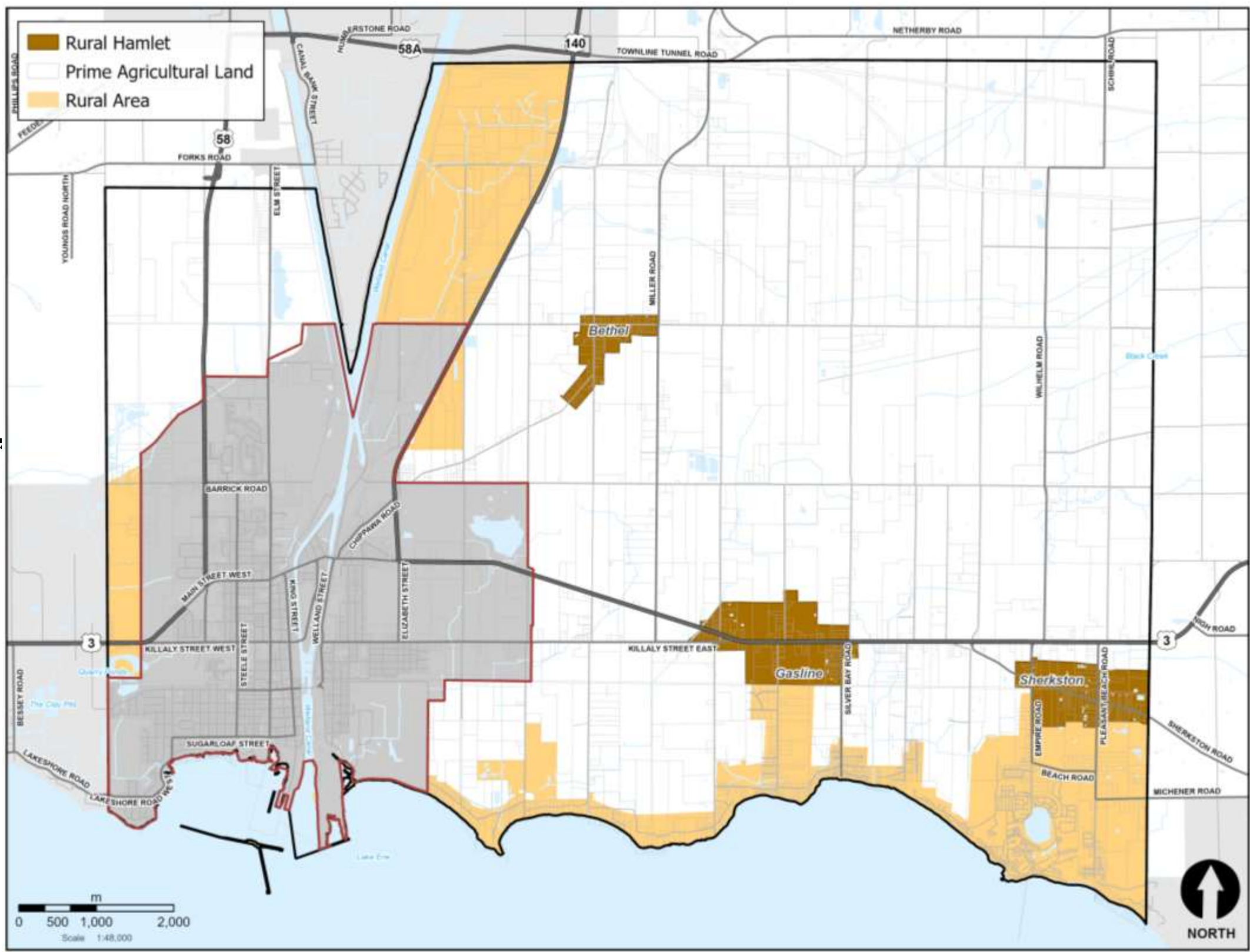
**New Requirement:** New non-farm developments will require an **Agricultural Impact Assessment** to prove they will not negatively affect nearby farm operations.

## SUPPORTING RURAL BUSINESS

The New Official Plan will clarify rules for **On-Farm Diversified Uses**. These are small-scale businesses located on a farm, such as farm markets, agri-tourism (like pumpkin patches or tours), or value-added processing (e.g. wineries, food production), that help farm businesses thrive without removing land from production.

## HOUSING FOR RESIDENTS ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS

We have updated our rules to allow up to **2 residential units** on agricultural lots (the main dwelling + one additional unit) to support those who live and work on our farms.



### What kind of activities would you like to see in our rural area? (Checklist)



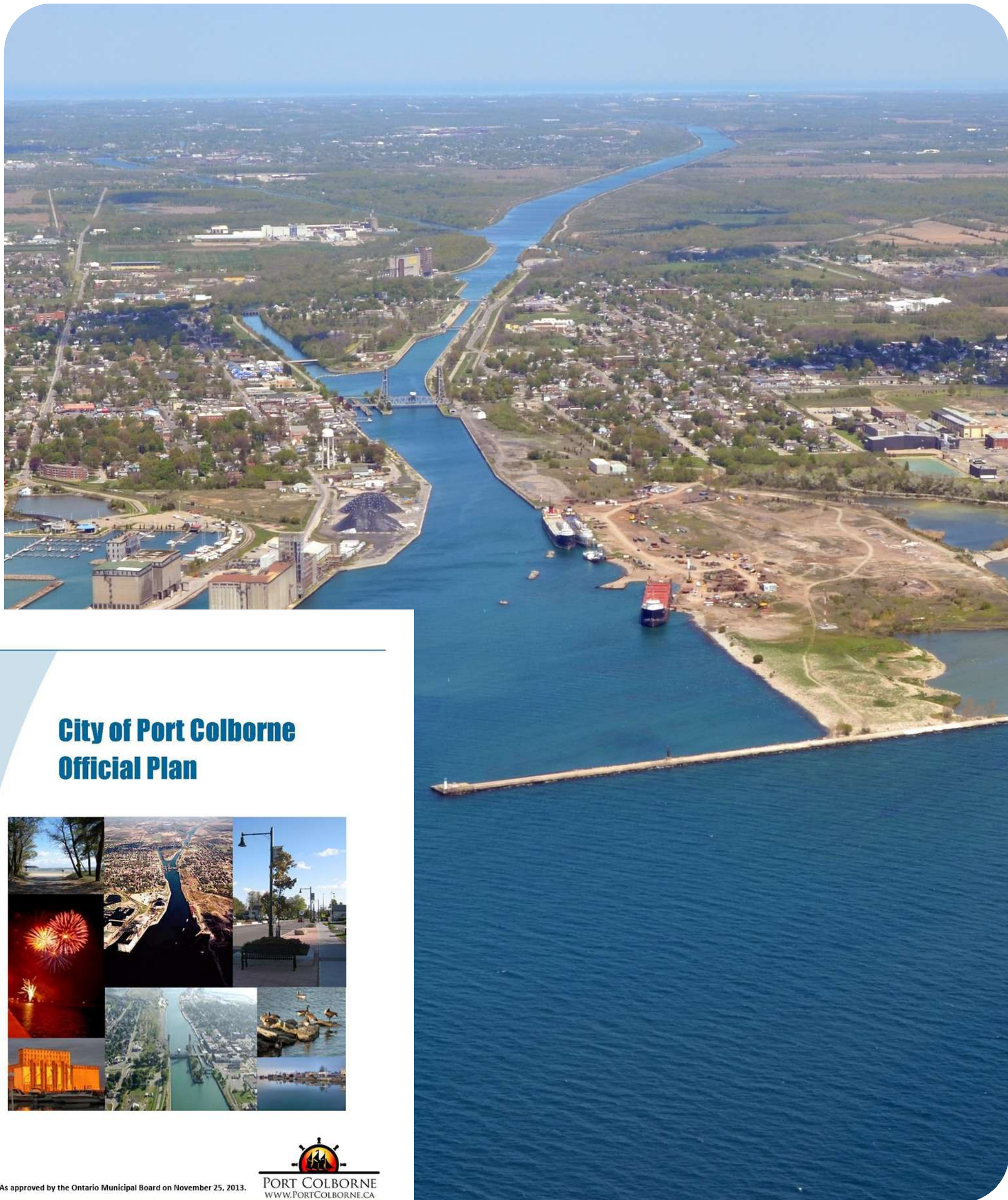
Farm stands/markets	
Bed & Breakfasts	
Seasonal Events	
None - keep it strictly farming	
Other? Please write it on a sticky note and place it in the box below.	

Use a sticky note to tell us:  
How can we better support our agricultural community?





# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



Your feedback today will help us refine our policy directions. We will use this input to write **Draft 1** of the New Official Plan.

### Stay Connected!

Please visit our project page to sign up for updates and view project documents.



[www.portcolborne.ca/newofficialplan](http://www.portcolborne.ca/newofficialplan)



Use a sticky note: What is one word you would use to describe your hope for Port Colborne in 2056?

