

Colchester resident public engagement

on land use options



Public Engagement Summary

January - February
2017



STRATHCONA
COUNTY

Introduction

Since 2007, Colchester has been identified in the Municipal Development Plan as the Rural/Urban Transition Policy Area. Colchester (the Rural/Urban Transition Policy Area) currently acts as a holding area for future development. This Policy Area required the completion of a Growth Management Strategy to determine future development. Although a Growth Management Strategy for the area was completed, Strathcona County Council did not choose to endorse the document.

On March 22, 2016 Council made a motion for Administration to include consideration of land use options for Colchester (the Rural/Urban Transition Policy Area) in the current Municipal Development Plan Update.

The policy areas below were presented to residents for consideration through a public engagement process:

- Option #1: Agriculture Large Holdings Policy Area
- Option #2: Agriculture Small Holdings Policy Area
- Option #3: Beaver Hills Policy Area

Colchester residents had the opportunity to provide their thoughts and input on the options at both an open house and through an online engagement and survey. This document summarizes the input provided through the public engagement process.



About the engagement process and events

The public engagement on land use options for Colchester was held from January 19 - February 13, 2017. A range of tactics were used to advertise the process in advance and ensure that area residents had the opportunity to learn about the open house and online engagement.

At the end of December 2016, each area resident was directly mailed a notification card advising them about the open house details and upcoming online engagement (see image on p. 7). This tactic ensured that each area resident was directly contacted and provided with key engagement details.

A newspaper ad, directly targeting Colchester residents ran in the Sherwood Park Newspaper starting January 6, 2017 to advertise the public engagement process (see image on p. 3).

Social media (Facebook and Twitter) was used to reach out to targeted area residents. The social media content and messaging directly targeted residents of the Colchester area (see image on p.3). County newsletters and the public engagement webpage were also used to advertise the process.

In addition, the Colchester Community League shared information about the public engagement opportunities through their website and social media pages.



The public engagement plan is situated at the input level of the public engagement continuum.

Open house January 19, 2017

The open house was held at Colchester Hall on January 19, 2017 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. There were approximately forty five (45) residents that attended the open house in total.

The open house was drop-in style. The attendees were invited to view information boards showing the specifics of the policy areas available to Colchester, including; Agriculture Large Holdings, Agriculture Small Holdings and the Beaver Hills Policy Areas.

The Country Residential Policy Area was not presented as an option for Colchester as the Regional Growth Plan does not allow for additional country residential beyond what is already designated.

Participants were asked to state their level of support for the policy area options by placing a dot on a sliding scale and posting their comment(s) on the applicable information boards with post-it notes.

The information boards were an inviting visual tool that incorporated images, colour, and the use of appropriate language to outline the information. Comment forms, background information, information regarding the existing Rural/Urban Transition Policy Area and information on the policies of the Regional Growth Plan were also provided.

Online engagement January 19-February 13, 2017

An online survey ran from January 19, 2017 to February 13, 2017. The County received sixty five (65) responses to the online survey. Of the sixty five (65) responses forty two (42) confirmed that they are from Colchester. Residents were asked the same questions online as those who attended the open house.

Do you live in Colchester?

Let's shape our future together.

MDP Update

Provide your input
Land use options for Colchester

As part of the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Update, Colchester area residents are invited to provide their input on three proposed land use options for the Colchester area. Agriculture Small Holdings, Agriculture Large Holdings or the Beaver Hills are the three policy areas presented for consideration as future land use options.

Open house and online engagement

Join us for the Colchester resident open house or provide your input online. The MDP online engagement, including an online survey for Colchester residents, will be open for your input from January 19 to February 13. Find details at:
www.strathcona.ca/MDP

Your County. Your Voice.

Drop in at an open house or provide your input online.

January 19; 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Drop in at any time

Colchester Hall
23219 Township Road 520

www.strathcona.ca/MDP

Janna Widmer
Planning and Development Services
780-464-8127
janna.widmer@strathcona.ca

Strategy Concept **Design** Implement

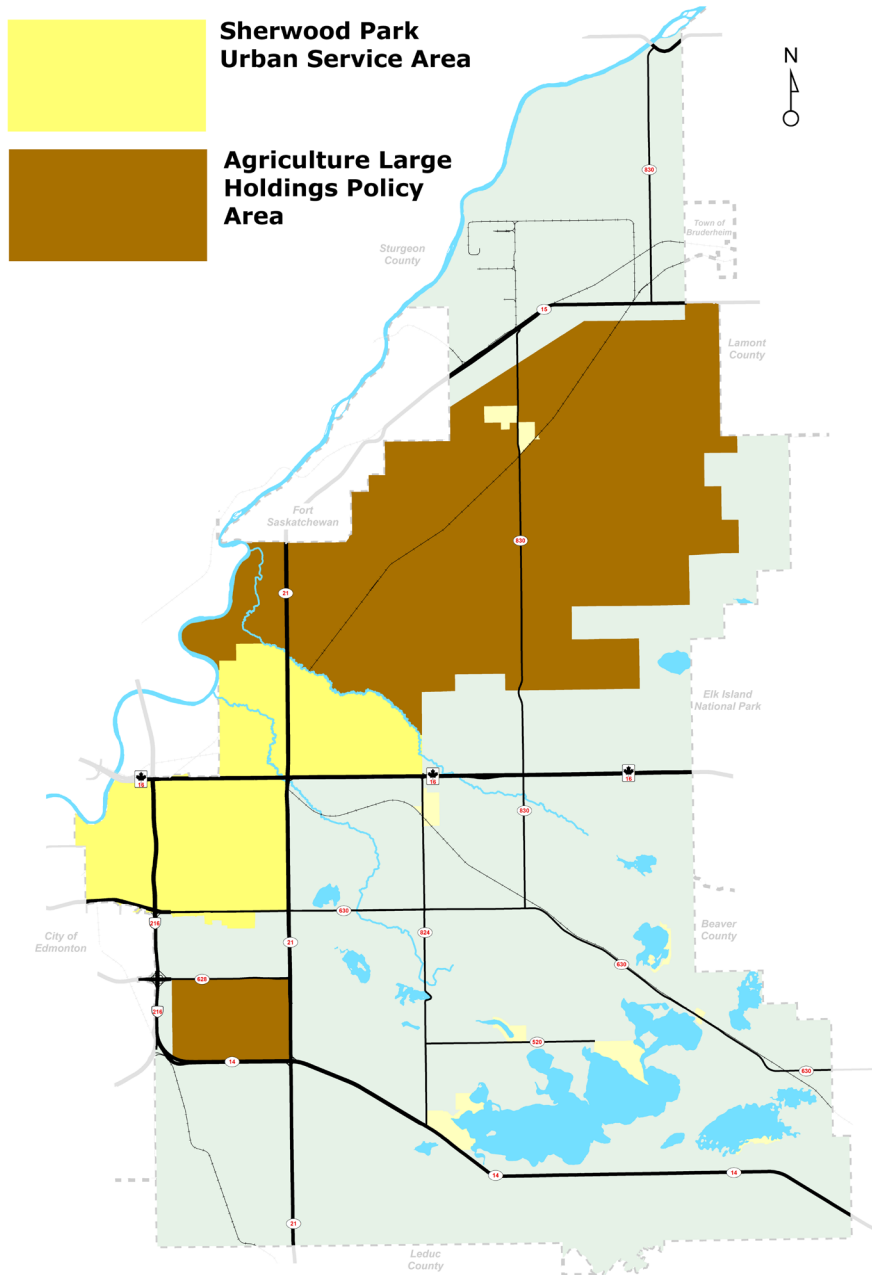
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Live in Colchester?
complete our survey!



Provide your input on land use options for the Colchester area.

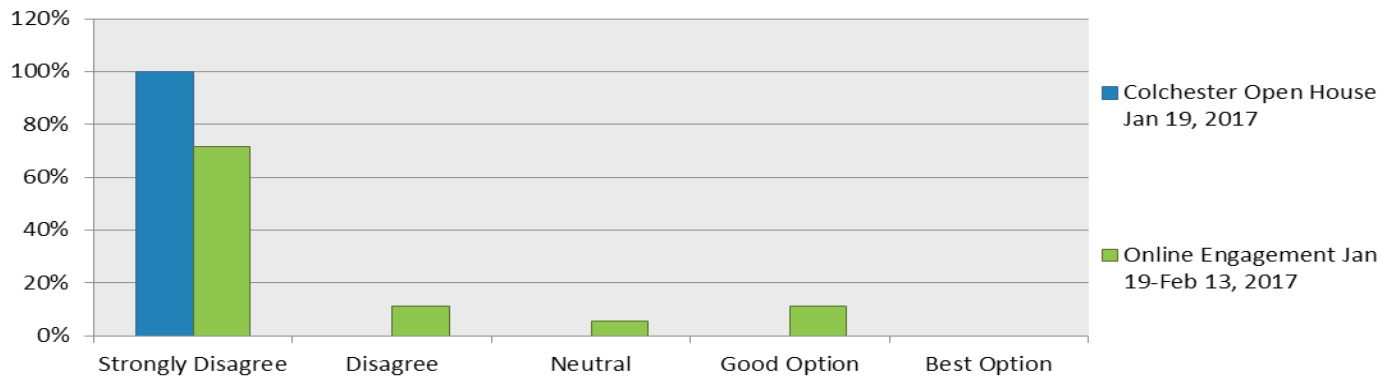
Map of policy area



Agriculture Large Holdings Policy Area

Residents were invited to provide their input on three different land use options - including the Agriculture Large Holdings Policy Area. If a comment was made that others agreed with at the open house, they were able to place a dot on the comment to show their agreement.

The goal of the Agriculture Small Holdings Policy Area is to provide opportunities for extensive agricultural operations and homesteads that respect the rural landscape and the environment.



Comments from the Jan. 19, Colchester Hall open house

- Ridiculous that this area be considered for Agriculture Large Holdings when Bremner was approved for urban. Bremner is much better farm land!- **1 agree**
- It is about 50 years too late for this option
- The soils not good

Comments from the online engagement

- Colchester is NOT prime agriculture land - it is mainly classes 3 and 4!!!! *The amount of land on one small tract of land (eg. a 1/4 section) is not sufficient to support a family financially * Not safe!!! Farming in an area so close to a large urban area and multiple subdivisions is very difficult especially when moving large machinery * Not a viable option to make a living on a small area, in a short time as a seasonal business (such as a corn maze - weather dependant) * Is the County going to say that land needs to remain agriculture but then tell the owners what they can or cannot raise (eg. what about hog farming or poultry!!!!)? * How can you suggest the lack of subdivision in Colchester after what has been decided to do with prime land in Bremner?????



- No one will be able to afford to purchase the land in this area. Why would they when they can purchase land further out for considerably less? - Please be informed before you post this. This is not #1 prime agriculture land. - No farmer would be able to make a living farming this area. Land costs are WAYYYY too high. - Local residents would complain about the close proximity of farm smells to Sherwood Park
- After viewing the map this makes no sense as all agriculture large holdings areas are located in the north east portion of the county. It makes absolutely no sense to apply this to the Colchester area. This is not an option.
- Agriculture, farmland of large holdings would be the Bremner area. Colchester is scrub land, not suitable for farming.
- I was not contacted about any of these meetings or decisions and am very disappointed as a land owner in this area that the county would not have done their due diligence in contacting all stakeholders. I guess this is one way to sneak through policy with no regard for long time residents of pioneering families.
- Inadequate option.
- It is not prime agricultural land, Bremner is and it was chosen for the urban development over Colchester.
- The Colchester area is NOT prime agricultural land. The soil quality is poor unlike Bremner which is some of the best soil in Alberta. The powers to be decided that the growth node should go on this land, in complete ignorance to the existing Ag plan for the county. This area is completely surrounded by acrages and is not suitable for agriculture in the long term!!!!
- The Growth Management Study for Colchester clearly outlined that the soils in the Colchester area were very poor (Class 4) and were not acceptable for agriculture which originally allowed the area to be considered as a growth node. There is insufficient areas to attract tourism in Colchester. Perhaps further south and east where the moraine exists may attract some form of tourism. Restricting the development of these lands from future residential land uses is a mistake considering the transportation infrastructure already exists around the perimeter of the area and the fact that future infrastructure can be provided more economically than Bremner. The storm water management has already been provided downstream in Fulton Marsh to accommodate Colchester. Being adjacent to the City of Edmonton boundary and alienating this area from economic viability is a mistake.
- The land is not suitable
- The scope of the opportunities is too narrow. Why such a rush to make these changes in a hurry?
- There is no way the County can promote large agricultural endeavours. The large land bases do not exist in Colchester. Moving farm equipment on our roadways is a disaster waiting to happen.



- This area should be 100% housing development. There is no other purpose for it with it being so close to Sherwood Park.
- This area should be left as it is small scale farming. Why is this group of residents continually trying to find ways of selling their property for more than what the area is zoned for and what they currently could get. This group is continuing to look for some sort of wind-fall led by a corrupt councillor trying to find a way to fill his pockets. No further residential development.
- This is not a realistic option as land prices are too high for farming to be a viable option. Farming practices require a minimum amount of land to be profitable. There is no way any farmer could make a living farming in this extremely small area.
- Where did you get the idea that this area had any prime agricultural land? You chose prime agricultural land to develop an urban centre when you chose Bremner against the advice of the Ag Master Plan. Also, it is not economically feasible to farm in this area as land here is expensive due to it's proximity to Edmonton.
- You got the city right on your doorstep. I do not think this is a long term plan.

Join us for an open house.

Provide your input on land use options




MDP Update

As part of the MDP Update Colchester residents are invited to provide their input on three proposed land use options for the Colchester area.

Open house and online engagement for Colchester residents
Date: Thursday, January 19, 2017
Time: Drop in any time between 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Location: Colchester Hall, Strathcona County
Address: 23219 Twp Rd 520

Can't attend the open house?
 An online survey for Colchester residents will be open for your input from January 19 - February 13:
www.strathcona.ca/MDP


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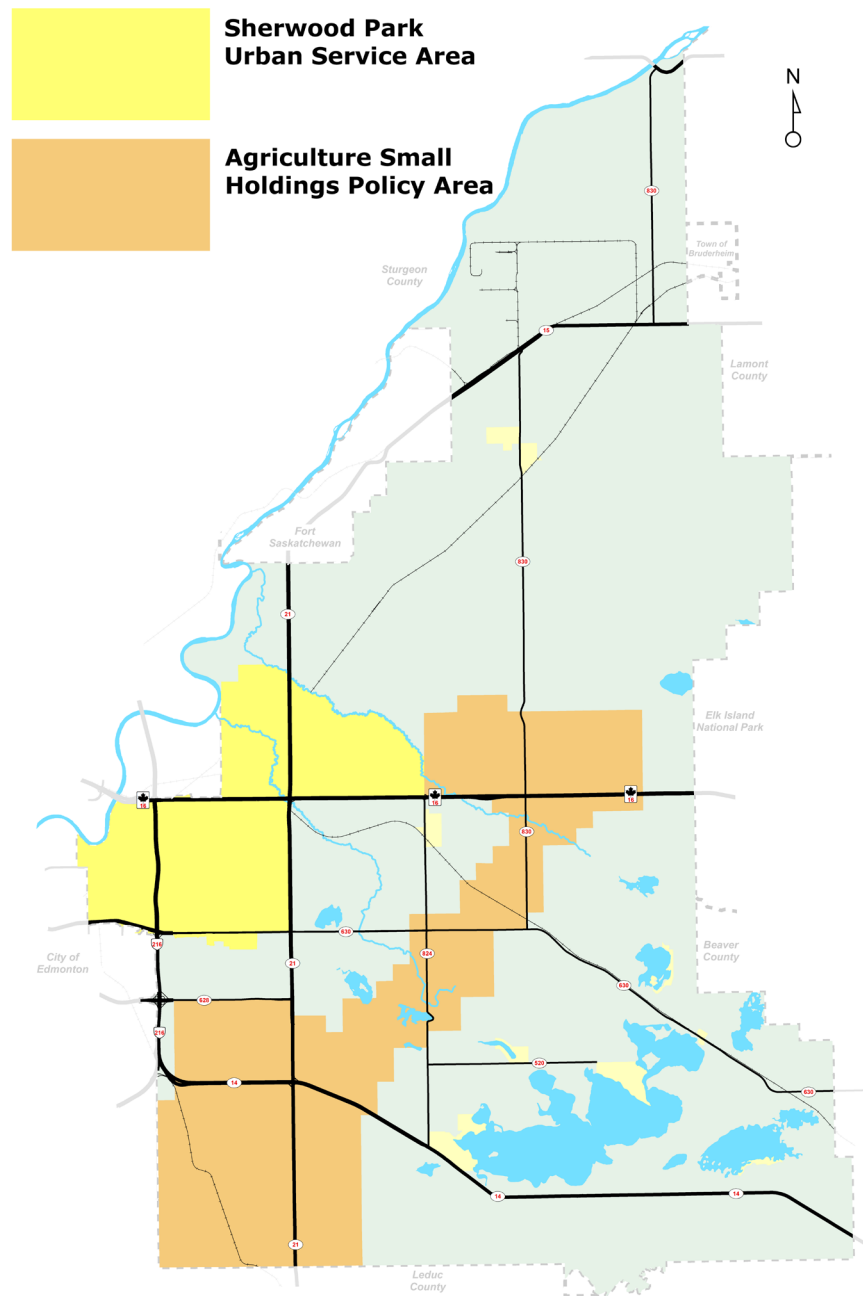

STRATHCONA COUNTY

Planning and Development Services
 2001 Sherwood Drive
 Sherwood Park, Alberta T8A 3W7

Let's shape our future together

Learn more and take part in the final phase of engagement for the MDP Update:
www.strathcona.ca/MDP
phone: 780-464-8127
email: janna.widmer@strathcona.ca

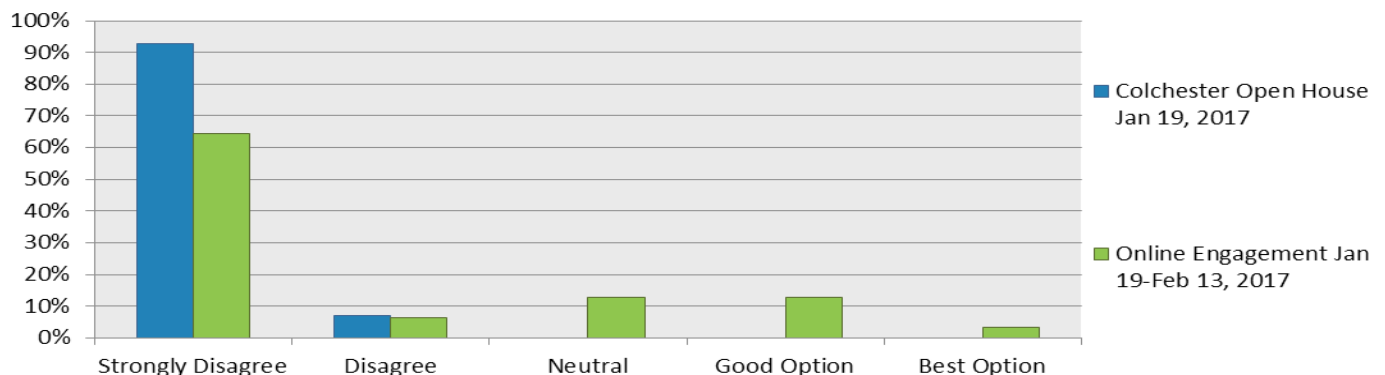
Map of policy area



Agriculture Small Holdings Policy Area

Residents were invited to provide their input on three different land use options - including the Agriculture Small Holdings Policy Area. If a comment was made that others agreed with at the open house, they were able to place a dot on the comment to show their agreement.

The goal of the Agriculture Small Holding Policy Area is to provide opportunities for intensive horticulture operations that allow for live-work, local food production and local food distribution which respects the rural landscape and the environment.



Comments from the Jan. 19, Colchester Hall open house

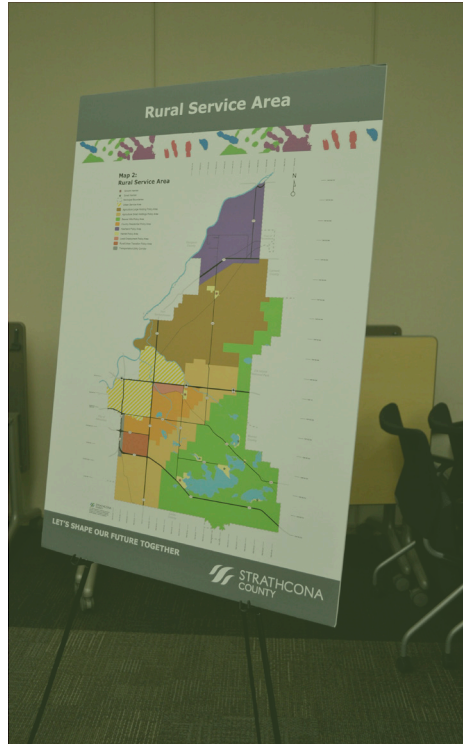
- Best option of the 3 presented, but would prefer smaller parcels **-1 agree**
- Would like to see smaller parcel sizes min 10 acres **-2 agree**
- Parcels too big for subdividing. 20 acres in this area is too expensive for small Agriculture
- Leave it larger acreage (ie. 5 acres)
- Maybe
- Solution-offer Colchester to the City of Edmonton for Urban Development
- Should be high density

Comments from the online engagement

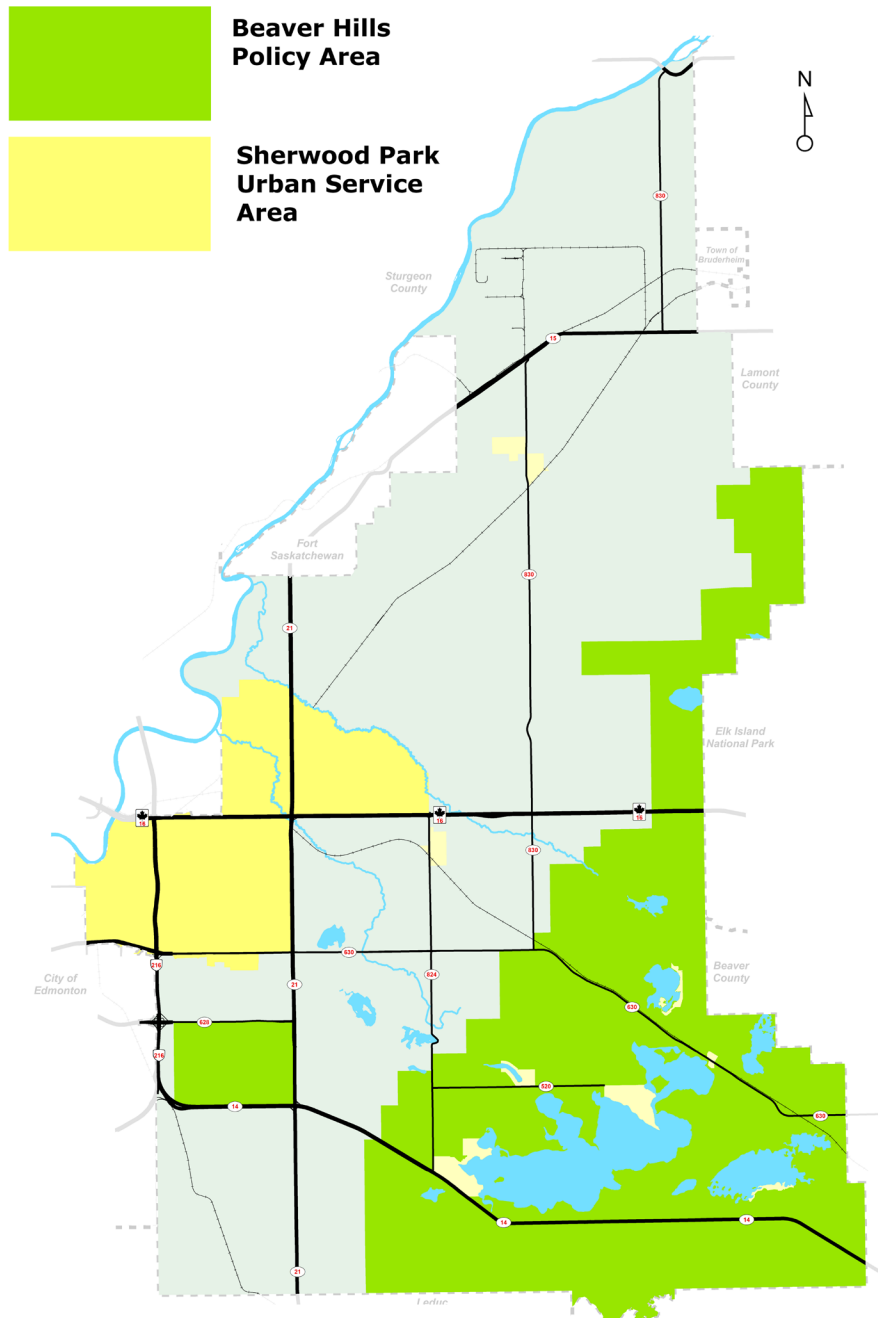
- How many small agriculture operations can you have in 9 square miles to make it viable for people to make a living (after you pay a high price for the land).
- No one would be able to afford to purchase this land and make a living as an agricultural small holdings policy. ???????? Who in their right mind would buy land there for this purpose??? There's no way anyone could afford to make a living doing this!!!!
- After viewing the above map this is not a good option for this area. The Colchester area is located too close to Sherwood Park. There would be too many regulations required, no one would consider this as a location to purchase land here for these operations.
- 1 I strongly disagree for all of the reasons stated for option 1
- 1 Inadequate option.



- Due to the proximity of this area to Edmonton the land in Colchester is too expensive to make small scale farming economically feasible.
- I strongly disagree for all of the reasons stated for option 1
- Inadequate option.
- Sounds like Salt Spring Island. Hippie Ville!
- The extremely poor grade of soil (mostly just clay and sand) in the Colchester area make it very difficult to support a wide variety of agricultural options. I know, I've been picking rocks out of my fields for going on 40 plus years.
- This area should be 100% housing development. There is no other purpose for it with it being so close to Sherwood Park.
- This area should be residential of some sort. As stated above, there is a number of vacant lots in the county, with nearly all of them in the far reaches away from the urban areas. Very few open lots remains in this area.
- This is not a viable option for this area. There is no small scale farmer that would be able to afford this land. Also the proximity is far too close to Sherwood Park. There would have to be too many regulations put into place on these small farms that would additionally discourage anyone from choosing to farm here. Think noise, smell, hours of operation.
- This is not the most advantages from a tax base , this location is to valuable to having it go from the future growth area to only large holdings with no country residential. There would be a strong demand for country residential with its proximity to the city and the existing infrastructure.
- This option has limited possibilities



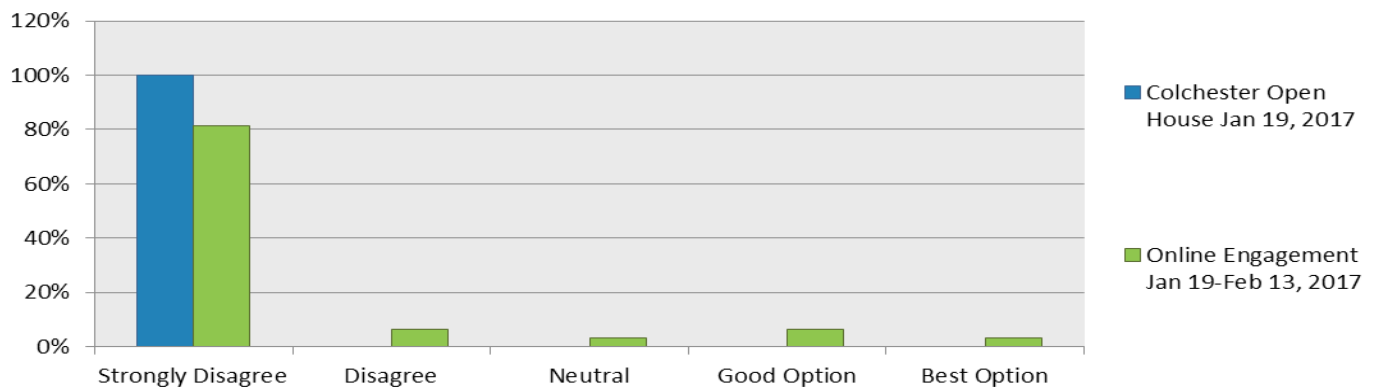
Map of policy area



Beaver Hills Policy Area

Residents were invited to provide their input on three different land use options - including the Beaver Hills Policy Area. If a comment was made that others agreed with at the open house, participants were able to put a dot beside that comment to indicate that they agree.

The goal of the Beaver Hills Policy Area is to conserve the integrity of the Beaver Hills Moraine and Biosphere and provide residents with opportunities to discover and enjoy the natural landscape.



Comments from the Jan. 19, Colchester Hall open house

- The area is cultivated (grain, hay, pasture) with little native areas. Why in the world would you integrate is back to Beaver Hills Biosphere?!

Comments from the online engagement

- Colchester is not part of the Beaver Hills Moraine and is far removed from the core of the Beaver Hills Biosphere * How many recreational resorts can you have in such a small area (9 sq. miles) - not really sustaining the land!!! * What good would a kayak rental stand be when there is nowhere to kayak???? * Who is going to develop ski trails on their property - how would you make a living - why would someone pay when The Wilderness Centre and The Cooking Lake - Blackfoot Recreation Area are available at no charge??
- I find this option odd to even consider. This land again is located on the doorstep of the Sherwood Park and the City of Edmonton. Some type of tourism may be a possibility but is should not be limited to one subdivision per quarter. One subdivision per quarter is almost like saying *let's save this decision until later"



Comments from the online engagement continued

- I think dealing with Colchester has been such a disappointing legacy of this council. Considering this council's commitment to farm land, developing Bremner and not Colchester is extremely hypocritical. Not to mention Colchester is in prime location at the corner of the Edmonton's areas most 2 major road ways (Whitemud and Henday). How is moving further away from both Edmonton and Sherwood Parks core beneficial to any future residence? There are very few councilors I think have really put thought and comprehension in to what the county should be doing with the Colchester area and how it effects the county and those with land and property there
- If you actually look at a map the Beaver Hills Moraine are considerably farther east. Who's fantastic idea was it to take these 9 square miles and label them as part of the Moraine when they are NOWHERE near it???? How many of you have actually visited the Beaver Hills Moraine at Elk Island and know what they even look like??? True Moraine are non-agricultural. You've totally contradicted yourselves in these 3 policy options for Colchester. How can an area be designated as a Moraine in one option then prime #1 farmland in the other two??? Please be informed before you attempt to decide what is best for this area. This small area is blocked in by major highways on 3 sides and over 69,000 people on the other and suddenly this area needs to be preserved??? While we're at it let's make it an ideal habitat for wildlife and see how many moose and deer can get flattened off of highways 14 and 21 as they attempt to move through...
- Inadequate option.
- Maybe we should make it a provincial park. Ridiculous option.
- None of these options are good options for Colchester. Resorts containing RVs and park models! Absolutely not! This is the worst of all the three options!
- Could you please advise or point us to information as to how these three options came up and who is promoting them.
- The Beaver Hills Moraine barely encroaches into Colchester. This moraine was not an issue when the lands were being considered as a growth node. Now the County is considering stagnation of the lands in support of preserving the moraine!
- The Beaver Hills Moraine is a huge area already and adding to it on the border of over a million people makes no sense. An area completely surrounded by freeways and residential.
- The Beaver Hills Moraine is east of Colchester and should not be considered as a viable option.
- This area should be 100% housing development. There is no other purpose for it with it being so close to Sherwood Park.
- This feels punitive to the larger land owners in this area. There is nothing 'touristy' about this area except in a small section.



- Tourism , you got to be joking. All we have in the Colchester area is largely murky sloughs and scrub brush.
- Upon viewing the above map this does not even make sense, as the Colchester area cannot even be considered as part of the Moraine. It is nowhere even close to the actual moraine. How is this even considered as an option in this matter???
- Yeah right. That's exactly why my father left us this property, so we could build a Dollyland RV park on our land. Buy my land and mess around with it up on your dime.
- You've just contradicted yourself with the first two options. The Beaver Hills Moraine are not agricultural land. Please read the following quote which is an excerpt from www.beaverhills.ca/media/resources/BHI_Land_Mgmt_Framework_Phase_1_Report_July_2006_final.pdf "The Beaver Hills/Cooking Lake moraine is a relatively large geomorphological feature to the east of Edmonton and overlapping five municipal counties" (please note on the above map how the teeny tiny square of Colchester seems a rather conveniently placed moraine???) "The moraine lands have low agricultural capability due to terrain and soil conditions, which has largely prevented clearing for agricultural uses. As a result, the area still supports native forests, grasslands and wetlands uncharacteristic of the broader agricultural landscape." As you know this 9 square mile area boasts none of the described features. This absolutely should not be included as an option for this area.

Additional Comments

Participants were provided an opportunity to provide general comments on the land use option at the open house. The following comments were received as general comments.

- Disagree with Regional Growth Plan Policies regarding Country Residential Development- **4 agree**
- Need an option made for Colchester which is an anomaly- **2 agree**
- Slow down the process, do not approve in April 2017 as is the plan- **2 agree**
- The Colchester area was completely betrayed by Council. Why were the councillors representing Sherwood Park allowed to vote on the new urban community? Perhaps Sherwood Park should be incorporated as a city and Strathcona County reorganized and represent the rural residents.
- All options are terrible. Why was there no consultation of the content of the options? Why is colchester grade 3 and 4 land even being considered for agriculture? You had your chance in Bremner. What a waste of grade 1 farmland. Again Strathcona County limits its long standing taxpayers in Colchester to few options.



Next Steps

Thank you to all residents who provided their input. The engagement summary will be presented to Council and shared with the public through the project webpage. Further input and direction will be provided by Council prior to finalizing the Municipal Development Plan.

It is anticipated that the final draft Municipal Development Plan will be brought forward for Council approval in the spring of 2017. However, the concurrent Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan and the Municipal Government Act updates could affect this timeline. Residents will have the opportunity to speak to Council directly regarding the final draft Municipal Development plan, during a public hearing that will be held when the document is brought forward to Council. Notices of public hearing are advertised in the Sherwood Park Newspaper, on the County website, and for this project on the Municipal Development Plan Update project page. Further information can found at: www.strathcona.ca/MDP.

