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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Community Growth and Economic Development Committee  
From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development  
Report: #2026-EDT-1  
Date: March 3, 2026

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**Subject:**

Growing Agri-Food Durham Annual Report

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**Recommendation:**

That the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee recommends:

That this report be received for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update on the implementation of the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan.
- 1.2 This report will be accompanied by a staff presentation from Stacey Jibb, Manager of Agriculture and Rural Economic Development, and Steffan Lemon, Agriculture Economic Development Specialist.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The [Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan](#) (the Plan) was endorsed by Council in June, 2022 and sets out the Region's activities to grow and support Durham's agri-food businesses and the agri-food industry over a period of five years. As one of the top goods-producing industries in the region, agri-food offers a significant economic opportunity to create jobs and enable economic growth in all corners of the region.

- 2.2 The [Local Food Business Retention & Expansion Action Plan](#) was incorporated into the Plan in 2022. The activities within the Local Food BR+E Action Plan are now identified as one of the Goal Areas of the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan.
- 2.3 According to the 2021 Census of Agriculture, Durham Region is home to 1,200 farms and 264,518 acres of agricultural lands, which is more than any other jurisdiction in the Greater Toronto Area. Durham's rural areas comprise a majority of the Region's land base, and the success of the agri-food industry is imperative to Durham's overall economic health.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 The Growing Agri-Food Durham – A Five-Year Plan to Grow the Agri-Food Industry was received by Planning and Economic Development Committee on June 7, 2022, and endorsed by Regional Council on June 29, 2022 ([#2022-EDT-10](#)).
- 3.2 The Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan Annual Report was received by Community Growth and Economic Development Committee on February 4, 2025 ([#2025-EDT-3](#)).
- 3.3 The Enabling Agriculture-Related and On-Farm Diversified Uses in North Durham – Project Overview and Update Report was received by Community Growth and Economic Development Committee on November 4, 2025 ([#2025-EDT-15](#)).

### **4. Implementation of the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan**

- 4.1 The Plan is a five-year action-focused plan to guide the activities of the Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Section. It describes activities to support the agri-food industry and agri-food partners/organizations across the region.
- 4.2 Since the last update provided in February 2025, Economic Development and Tourism Division staff have worked in collaboration with partners including the Durham Farm Fresh (DFF) Marketing Association, Durham Farm Connections (DFC), Durham Region Federation of Agriculture (DRFA), Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC), Durham College, the Township's of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock and others to deliver several projects, initiatives and events prescribed in the Plan.

4.3 The list below highlights some of the key activities completed in 2025 or underway to advance each of the ten goal areas identified within the Plan.

a. Goal 1: Retain and expand local food businesses.

- An annual campaign to Celebrate Local Food Week (June 2 to 8, 2025) included updates and promotion of the Invest Durham Local Food Directory and promotion of the DFF website, its members and various local food blog posts.
- Posts to celebrate the harvest season and to encourage shopping for locally grown produce and farm-to-fork dining were shared during Ontario Agriculture Week (October 6 to 12, 2025).
- The Economic Development and Tourism Division delivered the Gather at the Farm digital campaign in collaboration with DFF, to promote agri-food and visiting local farms to residents and visitors during the month of October.

b. Goal 2: Streamline regulations and approvals process for agri-food businesses.

- Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) information and other resources (e.g. OFA Community of Practice Webinars) were shared with the Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Working Group throughout the year to encourage participating in learning opportunities related to agriculture development.
- The project to enable Agriculture-Related (AR) and On-Farm Diversified (OFD) Uses in North Durham, which will be discussed further in Goal 3 below, identifies new policies and processes to streamline approvals for farms undertaking AR and OFD uses. The Township of Scugog began implementation of new AR and OFD use policies and streamlined processes in late 2025 making it easier for operators to overcome barriers to business startup and expansion.
- Regional Economic Development Staff presented at an on-farm diversified uses workshop organized by the Municipality of Clarington (Invest Clarington) in November 2025 to highlight the work underway in North Durham and share information with Municipal staff as well as farm operators around encouraging these types of uses.
- A workshop is currently being organized with a tentative date of April 2026 for the Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Working Group to provide details on the North Durham Project and highlight how other municipalities in Durham can incorporate similar policies and processes into their Official Plan and Zoning By-Laws.

- c. Goal 3: Enable and encourage agriculture-related, on-farm diversified uses and agri-tourism uses.
- The North Durham project to enable AR and OFD uses has now moved into the project implementation phase. Councils in the Townships of Scugog and Brock recently endorsed amendments to their respective Official Plans, Zoning By-Laws, Site Plan Control By-Laws and Fee By-Laws, among others, to make it easier and more cost efficient for farms to diversify. More information pertaining to this project can be found in report [#2025-EDT-15](#). Regional Economic Development staff continue to work closely with Planning Staff at the Townships to support businesses looking to diversify. This includes participating in pre-application meetings and assisting applicants to develop business plans. Recently, a new webpage was launched on the Invest Durham website which includes FAQ's as well as a Toolkit and Checklist (see Attachment #1) to help applicants understand the new policies and processes: [InvestDurham.ca/OnFarmDiversification](https://InvestDurham.ca/OnFarmDiversification).
- d. Goal 4: Advocate for infrastructure support.
- Throughout 2025, staff continued to support the Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority (HOPA) by providing data to assist with grain and fertilizer expansion forecasting. Staff are also assisting HOPA with securing an operator for the grain terminal at the Oshawa Port by facilitating introductions and connections with industry contacts.
  - Plans are underway for HOPA to deliver a report to the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) in 2026 with an update on recent infrastructure improvements to improve the grain terminal at the Oshawa Port.
- e. Goal 5: Increase agri-food processing capacity in Durham Region
- Staff continue to explore opportunities to attract and establish abattoir investment to the region.
  - Student career tours were held in Spring 2025 where culinary students were given an opportunity to learn about skills in meat cutting, which is a trade experiencing major labour shortages.
  - An Agri-Food Processing Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) project is planned to launch this year; this will include undertaking interviews with food processing businesses across Durham to highlight opportunities to enhance local food processing capacity.
- f. Goal 6: Identify opportunities and solutions for the workforce and labour shortages in the agri-food industry.
- A Precision Agriculture Field Day was hosted in partnership with DFC in May 2025 where over 100 secondary school students visited a farm in

Clarington to gain on-the-ground insights into the application of precision agriculture technologies and to explore the variety of career opportunities in agriculture.

- Staff exhibited at the Clarington Board of Trade Student Employer Summit in collaboration with DFC to showcase the opportunities to work in agriculture to high school students.
  - Culinary/meat cutting and agriculture mechanics career tours were organized for high school students in Spring 2025 to increase awareness of these career opportunities and provide hands-on experience for students.
- g. Goal 7: Provide resources for aging and young farmers
- A Durham Agriculture Leadership Program was executed in 2025 to provide farmers with the opportunity to grow their interpersonal, business and leadership skills. This program was a four-part series offered in collaboration with DRFA, one of the sessions titled 'Finding Fairness in Farm Transition' focused specifically on succession planning in the agriculture industry.
- h. Goal 8: Partner with agricultural organizations to deliver and expand agricultural literacy in the region.
- Ongoing support is provided to DFC who deliver educational programming for farm and non-farm populations in Durham Region, including an in-person event to educate primary school students about where food comes from and a community open house.
  - Staff supported DFF/DFC Shared Coordinator workplan development and activities, including support to facilitate funding through the Rural Ontario Development Program.
  - Throughout 2025, staff partnered with DFF and DFC to organize several culinary demonstrations at farms across Durham Region. The demonstrations highlighted how local food products can be prepared and enjoyed.
  - Economic Development and Tourism staff supported the planning and delivery of the annual DAAC Farm Tour held in September 2025.
  - Agri-food focused economic factsheets for municipalities are being developed and will be made available for wider distribution soon. This information is also shared with DAAC members to support their municipal presentations taking place over the course of Q1 2026.
- i. Goal 9: Enable and encourage a culture of innovation in agriculture.
- Invest Durham sponsored the OnTechU Brilliant Catalyst Competition in 2025 focused on agri-tech and innovation.
  - Staff assisted with the development of a workshop being delivered by the City of Pickering looking at controlled environment agriculture.

- j. Goal 10: Enhance urban agriculture.
- The Region advanced its partnership with the Barrett Centre for Innovation in Sustainable Urban Agriculture including participation on the urban agriculture advisory committee.
  - Staff supported the development of an urban agriculture policy paper with the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance. This was a partnership with the Barrett Centre.

4.4 Successful implementation of the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan relies on strong partnerships between the Region and our agri-food partners. Over the coming months, staff will be attending meetings of DFC, DFF, DRFA, DAAC and the Agricultural Advisory Committee of Clarington to share details related to the implementation of the Plan.

## **5. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following Strategic Direction(s) and Pathway(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. Resilient Local Economies

- R1. Attract and retain quality employers that strengthen key economic sectors, including energy and technology.
- R2. Support the growth of new business startups and small to medium local businesses.
- R3. Develop, attract, and support a skilled and qualified workforce, including youth and newcomers.
- R4. Protect and strengthen the local agriculture sector and food supply chains.

5.2 This report aligns with/addresses the following Foundation(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:

a. People: Making the Region of Durham a great place to work, attracting, and retaining talent.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 The Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan supports and enables growth and economic prosperity of the agri-food industry in Durham, one of the priority clusters identified in the Regional Economic Development Strategy (Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham).

- 6.2 Plans are underway to support, advance or launch several key initiatives that will advance Goals of the Plan in 2026. Areas of focus this year will include: ongoing implementation of the North Durham AR and OFD uses project, launching a BR+E project to grow local food processing capacity in Durham, and developing agriculture focused factsheets to communicate the importance and impact of the agri-food industry across Durham.
- 6.3 For additional information, contact: Stacey Jibb (Manager, Agriculture and Rural Economic Development).

## 7. Attachments

Attachment #1: North Durham Agriculture-Related and On-Farm Diversified Uses Toolkit

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Sandra Austin  
Commissioner of Community Growth and  
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer



# North Durham **Agriculture-Related** and **On-Farm Diversified Uses** Application Toolkit

Updated November 2025



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# How to Start Your Diversified Farm Business

Diversifying your farm business is an exciting opportunity and can be very rewarding! There are many reasons why farmers within Durham Region and across Ontario start a diversified farm business, including to have greater economic security, protect the viability of their farm over the long-term, support the community, or follow a passion. But it is also recognized that diversifying your farm can be a daunting and sometimes time-consuming journey, which is why this Toolkit has been prepared.

The Toolkit provides helpful guidance and resources for anyone interested in starting or expanding a diversified business on a farm in the Townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge.

## This Toolkit offers the following information and resources:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Overview of Permitted Farm-Based Businesses</b>	<b>Steps to Apply</b>	<b>Application Pathways</b>
Learn what types of diversified businesses are allowed on farms and how to get started in your township.	Understand the requirements, potential costs, and useful resources to consider when planning your project.	Discover how the process may vary depending on the type of business you're proposing.

The Townships and Region may provide other resources in addition to the information contained in this Toolkit. This Toolkit is an important resource, but you are strongly encouraged to reach out to the Region or the Township for additional information.

### Contacts

- ✉ Region of Durham Economic Development: [agriculture@durham.ca](mailto:agriculture@durham.ca)
- ✉ Township of Brock Development Services: [planning@brock.ca](mailto:planning@brock.ca)
- ✉ Township of Uxbridge Development Services: [building@uxbridge.ca](mailto:building@uxbridge.ca)
- ✉ Township of Scugog Planning and Development: [planning@scugog.ca](mailto:planning@scugog.ca)



## What are Agriculture-Related and On-Farm Diversified Uses?

The Province identifies different types of land uses that are recognized as diversified farm businesses. This includes agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses. The process and required steps to start an agriculture-related use or on-farm diversified use may differ, so it is important to understand how they are defined.

### Agriculture-Related Uses

An Agriculture-Related Use is a farm-related commercial or farm-related industrial use that is directly related to farm operations in the area, supports agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provides products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity.

Examples include:

- Processing and/or selling agriculture-related products (e.g., farm supply co-ops, farmers' markets and retailers of value-added products like wine or cider made from produce grown in the area)
- Apple storage and distribution
- Livestock assembly yard
- Farm equipment repair shops
- Abattoir
- Grain mill/dryer
- Cold/dry storage facility
- Agricultural research facility

Many of these uses add value to the agricultural commodities produced in the area.





## On-Farm Diversified Uses

An On-Farm Diversified Use is a use that is secondary to the principal farming operation or agricultural use of the property and is limited in area.

Examples include:

- On-farm markets or retail uses (may include a tack shop, antique shop)
- Farm café or small restaurant
- On-farm playgrounds
- Wineries and breweries
- Home industry
- Workshop spaces
- Agriculture event spaces
- On-farm accommodations

Uses generating significant traffic or that are better suited on municipal water and sewer servicing, such as large food processors or full-scale banquet halls, are not permitted and would be directed to locate in settlement areas.





## Other Important Terms and Definitions

There are other terms and associated definitions that are important to understand and may come up through discussions with the Region and the Townships. These are:

**Agri-tourism Uses:** Means those farm-related tourism uses, including limited temporary accommodation, which may include, for example, cabins, yurts, or tents, that promote the enjoyment, education or activities related to the farm operation.

**Farm:** Means a property of any size containing an agricultural use that is assessed as farmland, having a valid Farm Business Registration Number for the purpose of agricultural uses, but does not include cannabis production and processing. A farm may or may not have any associated buildings or structures.

**Farm Building:** Means all or part of a building that does not contain a residential occupancy, that is associated with and located on land devoted to agricultural uses, and that is used essentially for the housing of equipment or livestock, or the production, storage or processing of agriculture and horticulture produce or feeds.

**Farm Operation:** Means an agricultural use(s) that is operated as a distinct business and recognized by having a valid Farm Business Registration Number. A farm operation may include one or more farms on different properties that are owned or leased by the farm operation, and those farms may be disconnected geographically. There may be more than one farm operation on a farm.

**Normal Farm Practices:** Means a practice, as defined in the Farming and Food Production Act, 1998, that is conducted in a manner consistent with proper and acceptable customs and standards as established and followed by similar agricultural operations under similar circumstances; or makes use of innovative technology in a manner consistent with proper advanced farm management practices. Normal farm practices shall be consistent with the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 and regulations made under that Act.

There may be additional definitions that you will need to be familiar with and understand, depending on the nature of your business plan. The Region and the Townships will bring these to your attention and work with you to ensure that you understand what they mean and how they may relate to your interests.

For additional information, please refer to the [Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas](#) developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agri-Business. These Guidelines contain resources related to Agriculture Related and On-Farm Diversified Uses, including examples, please see pages 16 and 23 of the Guidelines.



## Process Overview

The following flow chart provides a general overview of the four-step process: identify what information you might need to start the application process with the Townships, and helpful resources for starting your business.

### Step 1: Learn More About Starting My Business

Engage the Region about your business plan to better understand what you want to do and to identify what information you might need to start the application process with the Townships, and helpful resources for starting your business.



### Step 2: Submit the Pre-Application Checklist

Complete the pre-application checklist and submit to Regional Staff. This information details what will be important for the Region and the Townships to guide you through the application process. Township planner may schedule a meeting with you and any relevant authorities that may wish to discuss the development and provide feedback.



### Step 3: Site Plan Control

Submit an application to the Township according to the outcome of Step 2. The Township will determine if your business idea is exempt from Site Plan Control, or if a Minor Site Plan or Standard Site Plan applies.



### Step 4: Building Permits

Obtain a building permit from the Township to proceed with developing your business idea!



## Initiating Your Business Idea

The Region and Townships work closely together to receive and review applications to support individuals who are interested in starting an agriculture-related use and/or on-farm diversified use. The process to achieve this is generally organized into four steps:

### Step 1: Is My Proposed Business Permitted?

Before applying to the Township, it is helpful to understand what may be required, and how these requirements may impact your project or timelines as you plan for your business. This section of the Toolkit provides a summary of the regulations for developing businesses in the Townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge. The links below can provide more specific information about these requirements:

#### Official Plans and Zoning By-laws

There are two important documents that guide land use within the Townships; the Official Plan and the Zoning By-law. These documents are described as follows:

- **Official Plan:** An official plan describes policies on how land in your community should be used. It is prepared with input from your community and helps to ensure that future planning and development will meet the specific needs of your community.
- **Zoning By-law:** Controls the use of land within a community, and more specifically how land may be used, where buildings or structures can be located, the types of buildings that are permitted (and how they may be used), and other matters such as lot size and dimensions, parking requirements, building height, and setbacks from streets.

Each of the Townships have both an Official Plan and Zoning By-law, and they are important resources for determining where your proposed business may be permitted and what types of requirements might apply. The links below provide access to current Official Plans and Zoning By-laws, but it is recommended that you contact your local Township planner first for more information. Note: Each Township is working to implement changes to their Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to support Agriculture-Related Uses and On-Farm Diversified Uses based on a study and recommendations endorsed by Township Councils in 2025.

- [Township of Brock Official Plan](#)
- [Township of Brock Zoning By-law](#)
- [Township of Scugog Official Plan](#)
- [Township of Scugog Zoning By-law](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Official Plan](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Zoning By-law](#)



**Does my project qualify as an agriculture-related use or an on-farm diversified use?**

It is important to understand that only agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, and on-farm diversified uses are allowed to operate on bona-fide farms. Any land use or activity that is not defined as one of these uses is generally not permitted in the agricultural/rural area.

Most types of businesses and land uses may be permitted in agricultural areas if they satisfy the criteria for an agriculture-related use or an on-farm diversified use. Broadly, the criteria apply to ensure that the use/activity does not negatively impact the long-term viability or vitality of agricultural lands. The criteria below can be used to help inform this decision. However, it is important to note that the ultimate decision of whether a proposed use is permitted rests with the Township.

**A use may be permitted as an Agriculture-related Use if it satisfies the following criteria:**

1. The use is a farm-related commercial or farm-related industrial use;
2. The use is directly related to farm operations in the area;
3. The use supports agriculture;
4. The use provides direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity;
5. The use benefits from being in close proximity to farm operations; and
6. The use is compatible with, and does not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations

**An agriculture-related use must be directly related to farm operations in the local area, can be located on a farm or on a separate lot, and the area requirements are generous.**

**A use may be permitted as an On-Farm Diversified Use if it satisfies the following criteria:**

1. The use is located on a farm;
2. The use is secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property;
3. The use is limited in area, specifically, it occupies less than 2% of the farm property up to a maximum of one (1) hectare;
4. The use may include home occupations, home industries, agri-tourism (including on-farm accommodations), and value-added uses; and
5. The use is compatible with, and does not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations.

**An on-farm diversified use can be a wide-range of uses that are located on a farm that may or may not be directly related to farm operations in the area, but that is limited in area.**



The Townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge permit agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses in agricultural areas.

### **Why is This Important:**

There may be different rules that businesses and activities are subject to depending on whether they are categorized as an agriculture-related use or an on-farm diversified use. For more context, information and examples, please refer to OMAFRA's [Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas](#).

If one or more criteria is not satisfied for either an on-farm diversified use or agriculture-related use, the use may not be permitted as originally envisioned. However, the diverse nature of the agricultural community and associated activities means that some of the criteria may apply differently depending on the proposed business. The Townships ultimately have the authority to interpret and apply the criteria and will work to support you through the land use planning process.





## Area Calculation Requirements

The total area of a lot that can be used for an on-farm diversified use or agriculture-related use is subject to a maximum amount.

**For agriculture-related uses, the maximum area depends on the total lot area, as follows:**

- On a lot that is greater than 20 hectares or more, the maximum permitted area is 30% of the total lot area. It is important to note that for the purpose of interpreting “maximum permitted area”, the Townships may refer to the term “lot coverage” which generally includes buildings and structures.
- On a lot that is less than 20 hectares, a minimum of 30% of the total lot area must be undeveloped and generally in a more natural state. For example, this might include lawns, gardens, forests, or ponds. The Townships may use the term “landscaped open space” when describing this requirement.

**For on-farm diversified uses, the area is calculated to include all driveways, parking areas, landscaping, and areas dedicated to infrastructure, such as on-site servicing (e.g., septic systems). The calculation is cumulative, meaning that the calculation includes all existing and proposed on-farm diversified uses. The maximum permitted area is:**

- No more than 2% of the size of the farm lot up to a maximum of one (1) hectare.

Any buildings that are used for an on-farm diversified use also must not exceed the maximum permitted gross floor area. This area is also relative to the overall size of the farm property and the total area permitted for the on-farm diversified use. It includes all new and existing buildings that are proposed to be used for the on-farm diversified use. The maximum permitted gross floor area is:

- No more than 20% of the maximum permitted area for the on-farm diversified use, up to a maximum of 2,000 square metres of gross floor area.





However, there are some ways to maximize the amount of area the on-farm diversified use can occupy on a farm property. If the on-farm diversified use makes use of existing agricultural buildings, parking areas and laneways, the size may be larger. The following describes how the area of the proposed use can be discounted from the maximum permitted area:

- Existing laneways and parking areas that are shared with agricultural uses and/or agriculture-related uses are not counted towards the maximum permitted area of the proposed on-farm diversified use. This is because no additional land is removed from the agricultural operation.
- Proposed on-farm diversified uses that occupy existing agricultural buildings built ten years ago or longer (this includes buildings that have been reconstructed on the same area), may be discounted by 50%. This means that if the maximum floor area for an on-farm diversified use is 500 square metres, the proposed on-farm diversified use can be up to 1,000 square metres if it is wholly contained within an existing agricultural building; or, if there are multiple buildings, each square metre of the area that is proposed within an existing agricultural building only counts as 0.5 square metres, and each square metre within a newly proposed building counts as one square metre.
- Any area that is used for the on-farm diversified use, but which is shared by an agricultural crop or production, does not count towards the area of the on-farm diversified use.

Where a farm property already has 2% or 1 hectare of area used by an on-farm diversified use, no new areas proposed for on-farm diversified uses are permitted.

Where both an agriculture-related use and an on-farm diversified use are located on the same farm property, the area calculation requirements described above will be applied separately to each use. For example, in no circumstance is an on-farm diversified use permitted to be greater than 2% of the total lot area or 1.0 ha, whichever is less, but a 1.0 ha on-farm diversified use would not restrict the area of an agriculture-related use, provided the maximum area calculations for agriculture-related uses as identified above, are satisfied.

The specific requirements that may apply to your business will be identified by your Township planner during the pre-application stage of your application, described in Step 2 of this Toolkit.

## Is My Business Permitted on My Property?

If your proposed business can be considered an agriculture-related use or an on-farm diversified use, and fits the criteria and area requirements outlined above, it may be permitted on your property, provided it satisfies any applicable requirements of the official plan, zoning by-law, and other applicable municipal by-laws. Both the Region and the Townships can help you better understand what additional requirements might apply depending on the nature of your business idea. To start the process of having your local planning authority review your application for a proposed business, please refer to Step 2 of this Toolkit.



## Step 2: Pre-Application Information Gathering

The Information Gathering step is the second step of this process. It is intended to connect you to staff at the Region and the Township who are able to help refine the concept for your proposed business based on the land use planning framework, which will ultimately allow the Townships to better understand your business idea.

### What do I Need to Provide:

As part of the pre-application, you will need to submit the following:

#### 1. Pre-Application Checklist

The pre-application checklist is attached to this Toolkit and available as a separate document for ease of use. It asks a series of questions related to your property and proposed business. Fill out the checklist to the best of your ability – the more information you can provide, the easier it will be for the Region and the Townships to learn more about your business idea and if any further information is needed.

#### 2. Conceptual Site Plan

Draw out a conceptual site plan for your proposed business. It does not need to be professionally done or represent the final architectural drawings. The purpose is to help the Townships understand what you are proposing, and where, so that relevant comments can be provided on how to ensure the next steps of the process are successful. The conceptual site plan should clearly show, at minimum, the following:

- The area and dimensions of the lot;
- The location and area of existing buildings;
- The location and area of driveways, lanes, and parking areas;
- The location, area, and dimensions of all proposed buildings, parking areas, and lanes;
- All uses that are present on the lot;
- Existing and proposed well and septic services;
- Electrical services;
- Separately identify any washrooms that may be used by employees or the public.

OMAFRA's [AgMaps](#) is a helpful tool which can be used to draw the Conceptual Site Plan. The AgMaps tool includes the ability to measure the lot, show existing buildings through satellite imagery, draw proposed buildings, make measurements within the lot, etc.



## What Happens During the Pre-Application?

When you have submitted your pre-application checklist to the Region, staff will work with you to understand what your intentions are, what resources you might need to prepare, and guide you through the remainder of the process. The Region will coordinate with the Townships regarding your business idea, using the pre-application checklist as preliminary information.

There are other agencies and departments within the Township, Region, and Province, that may have an interest in providing comments on your proposed business. Regional staff will help to ensure that you are prepared to discuss your proposal with these relevant authorities.

At this point, the Township planner may schedule a meeting with you and any relevant authorities that may wish to discuss the development and provide feedback. Such agencies may include, for example, the conservation authority, staff from Durham Region, departmental staff from the Township, and utility providers. The invited agencies will be able to identify any requirements that fall under their authority. For example, the conservation authority will provide direction on requirements for waterways and wetlands, and what you may need to demonstrate that your proposed business meets their requirements. Alternatively, an agency may confirm that they have no comments, and, in that case, you would not need to do anything further.

At this meeting, the Township planner will work with you to suggest modifications to your proposal based on this feedback and will identify what applications may be needed for your proposal, if any. They will also identify any additional information required, which could include details on expected traffic, water usage, or wastewater treatment (e.g., septic systems). At this point, the Township planner may also indicate what is required for Site Plan Control, which is detailed in Step 3 of this Toolkit.

The information, details and/or briefs identified at this stage may vary in terms of scope, which will be determined by the Township at the pre-application meeting.

Additional information may be found at [InvestDurham.ca/OnFarmDiversification](https://www.investdurham.ca/OnFarmDiversification)



## Step 3: Site Plan Control

Site Plan Control is a planning tool that municipalities use to provide detailed direction on development. For example, it is used to evaluate certain site elements, such as the location and placement of buildings and structures, walkways, parking areas, or traffic circulation, to ensure that the proposed business is safe, functional and meeting the intent of agriculture-related uses or on-farm diversified uses. It is important to note that both agriculture-related uses or on-farm diversified uses may be exempt from Site Plan Control, depending on the nature of your business idea. This could include, for example, that your business idea minimizes potential impacts on neighbouring properties, infrastructure (such as roads), farming operations, and the environment.

Under Step 3, there are three different streams, depending on the specifics of your application: site plan exempt, minor site plan, or standard site plan applications. The Township may identify that additional information, briefs, or even studies are required to inform their decision. Depending on the specific nature and context of your proposed business, the Township may identify one or more required inputs. This may include, but is not limited to, information and details pertaining to traffic, parking, emissions, noise, water, agricultural impact, or the environment, for example. There may be other considerations as well that the Township will identify as deemed to be applicable based on the nature of your business idea.

### Site Plan Exempt

The Township may determine your proposal for an agriculture-related use or on-farm diversified use is minor and/or incidental to the agricultural use and is unlikely to have negative impacts on the surrounding agricultural area, your neighbours, or municipal infrastructure. In this case, your proposed business may be exempt from Site Plan Control. The Township may make this decision at their discretion, but it must be clear from Step 2 that your business idea is aligned with the local land use framework (e.g., official plan and zoning by-law) and satisfies the requirements from any relevant authority (e.g., the conservation authority).

Matters that the Planner may take into consideration are if the use is entirely within existing agricultural buildings, or new buildings that have minimal impact to the surrounding area, or what demands for water or wastewater the proposed use will have, if the proposed use will generate any noise or traffic, any potential negative impact to the environment, and the relative location of the use on the property relative to the context of surrounding area. The discretion for determining if your proposed business is exempt is at the discretion of the planner at the time of the pre-application meeting. If the proposal is exempt from Site Plan Control, proceed to step 4.



## Minor Site Plan

A Minor Site Plan Application may be necessary to demonstrate that your business idea meets all the policies and requirements of the Township and the Province.

### What Information May be Required for a Minor Site Plan?

The required information for a Minor Site Plan may be determined by the Township during Step 2. This may include, for example, information, briefs, and/or studies related to traffic, parking, emissions, noise, water, agricultural impact, or the environment. It is important to note that not all of these requirements may apply. The Township will ultimately be responsible to identify what is required based on the nature of your application.

This step will also require a drawing of your proposed development that identifies the location of any buildings, structures, and/or areas that are intended to be used for your business. Please refer to your Township's site plan application guides for more information or contact the Township.

The site plan process may involve multiple discussions with the Township. The Township may request changes or additions to your application in response to comments from relevant authorities, or as a result of the Township's own review. These will be for the purpose of ensuring that the site plan addresses all the necessary requirements.

The Township may or may not require you to sign an agreement, which will ensure that the details and conditions agreed upon under a Minor Site Plan are met before your business idea is developed. Once the Minor Site Plan is approved, and if an agreement is executed, proceed to step 4.

Additional information may be found on the Township's website:

- [Township of Brock Site Plan Approval Process](#)
- [Township of Scugog Site Plan Approval Process](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Site Plan Approval Process](#)

## Standard Site Plan

The Township may determine that your business idea requires a Standard Site Plan, based on the nature of your application. A Standard Site Plan includes an increased application fee, and you will be required to demonstrate, with documentation, that the proposed development satisfies applicable land use regulations, such as those established by an official plan or zoning by-law. Similar types of studies and/or briefs required for a Minor Site Plan may also apply to a Standard Site Plan. The requirements of a Standard Site Plan will be determined by a planner and according to the site plan requirements of the Township. An agreement will be required before you can apply for a building permit in Step 4.



## Step 4: Building Permits

Whether you are planning a new building or making use of an existing one, you will need to apply for a building permit. To submit a building permit application, you'll need to provide the following paperwork to help staff review your project:

- A complete and signed permit application form
  - › Including Designer information 'Schedule 1' corresponding with the designer's name and BCIN on all drawings submitted with the application
- A copy of the Property Deed may be required in some cases
- A copy of the approved site plan, if applicable
- A complete set of construction drawings, drawn to scale, including applicable:
  - › Foundation Plans (size of walls, footings, and piers)
  - › Floor Plans (overall dimensions, room names, structure information etc.)
  - › Building Elevations (from all sides showing wall and roof height, window, and door locations, etc.)
  - › Cross Sections (through the wall from footings to roof noting all materials in the foundation, wall, and roof assembly)
- A Heat Loss/Gain Calculation and Mechanical Ventilation Design Summary/Layout
  - › Provided along with calculations – Schedule 1: Designer Information
- An Energy Efficiency Design Summary form and applicable supporting documents
- A Copy of the Truss Layout for roof and/or floor layout
- A copy of the Well and Septic Report and/or Permit
- Other applicable approvals / supporting documentation may apply:
  - › Conservation Authority permit or written permission
  - › Proof of address for the agriculture-related use or on-farm diversified use (which may require the purchase of an additional blue 9-1-1 address plate)
  - › A Minimum Distance Separation Calculation, as required by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to ensure that the new use will not impact surrounding livestock facilities and vice versa.



Additional information may be found on the Township's website:

- [Township of Brock Building Permits](#)
- [Township of Scugog Building Permits](#)
  - › [Building Permits | Township of Scugog](#)
  - › [How to submit a building permit application](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Building Permits](#)





## What Else Should I Consider in Planning My Project?

There are other considerations when planning your business. Some of these considerations are identified below, with additional resources or information linked for convenience. You are encouraged to discuss these considerations in more detail with the Region and the Townships through the pre-application process.

### Municipal Fees

Certain municipal fees may apply in order to start your business, including fees related to land use planning and building permits, for example. Fees are established by a by-law of Council and may change or be modified from time to time. You are encouraged to confirm applicable fees with the Townships through the Pre-Application Process.

- [Township of Brock Municipal Fees](#)
- [Township of Scugog Municipal Fees](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Municipal Fees](#)

### Development Charges

Development charges are fees collected by a municipality through development. These fees are typically used to pay for the cost of various infrastructure and service improvements that are required to accommodate the growing needs of a community as a result of growth. The Region and the Townships each administer development charges that may be applicable to your business idea. To learn more, the following resources are available, and both the Region and the Townships can provide more information:

- [Region of Durham Development Charges](#)
- [Township of Brock Development Charges](#)
- [Township of Scugog Development Charges](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Development Charges](#)



## Minimum Distance Separation

The Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) formulae and guidelines is a Provincial land use planning tool that determines setback distances between livestock barns, manure storages or anaerobic digesters and surrounding land uses, with the objective of minimizing land use conflicts and nuisance complaints related to odour. Demonstrating that an MDS setback can be met, may be required before a land use planning approval or building permit can be issued. **The Minimum Distance Separation (MDS)** document provides additional information and establishes the Provincial requirements, but you are encouraged to discuss this further with the Region and the Townships as it relates to diversifying your farm business. In the context of ARUs and OFDUs, MDS may be applied for on-farm accommodations.

## Property Taxes

More information regarding property taxes may be found on the Townships website:

- [Township of Brock Property Taxes](#)
- [Township of Scugog Property Taxes](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Property Taxes](#)

## Noise By-law

More information regarding noise by-laws may be found on the Townships website:

- [Township of Brock By-laws and Policies](#)
- [Township of Scugog Noise By-law](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Noise By-law](#)

## Site Alteration

More information regarding site alteration may be found on the Township's website:

- [Township of Brock Site Alteration Permits](#)
- [Township of Scugog Site Alteration Permits](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Site Alteration By-law](#)

## Special Events on Public and Private Property By-law

More information regarding special events or private property by-laws may be found on the Township's website:

- [Township of Brock By-laws and Policies](#)
- [Township of Scugog Special Events Permit](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Special Events By-law](#)



## Accessibility Design Standards

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is a provincial law that sets out a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards, including those that apply under the Ontario Building Code. Any development associated with your business idea may be subject to the requirements of the AODA. You are encouraged to further discuss this with the Townships to understand what considerations will need to be made when planning your business idea.

## Additional Resources

The following additional resources are available for your consideration:

### Business Toolkits

- [Township of Brock Business Toolkit](#)
- [Township of Scugog Business Toolkit](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Business Toolkit](#)

### Durham Region Agriculture Sector Resources

Please visit the following resource to learn more about agriculture in Durham Region:

- [Durham Region Agricultural Sector Resources](#)

### Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas (Publication 851):

These Guidelines are published by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Ministry of Rural Affairs. They provide more specific direction on how to interpret and implement the Provincial policy related to agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses within Ontario and are generally reference by municipalities as an important resource to support agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses, while understanding what types of requirements may apply. It may be valuable to read the Guidelines in advance of contacting the Township.

- [Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas \(Publication 851\)](#)

### What Additional Permits or Inspections Do I Need?

You may need to obtain a building permit from the Township if you are proposing to construct a new building or structure or modify an existing one. Please consult the following resources for additional information:

- [Township of Brock Building Permits](#)
- [Township of Scugog Building Permits](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Building and Construction](#)



If you are proposing to use an existing sewage system, a Change of Use application must be submitted to the Durham Region Health Department (DRHD). This application is required because the private sewage system must be evaluated to ensure it meets the requirements of the Ontario Building Code for the proposed use.

A Building Permit for a private sewage system is required from the DRHD if you are proposing to install a new sewage system or upgrade an existing one. Please consult the following resource for additional information:

- [Region of Durham Sewage System Applications](#)

## Your Business and Public Health

Certain types of businesses have public health requirements and required on-site inspections from Durham Region public health inspectors. Learn about [public health applications and requirements](#) that may affect your business.

If you plan to operate any of the types of businesses listed below, please [contact the Durham Region Health Department \(DRHD\)](#) to learn more about any public health requirements pertaining to your business.

- Food premise
- Personal service setting
- Child care centre
- Recreational water facility
- Residential housing
- Tobacconist or vape store

Below are examples of requirements for certain types of businesses:

- [Contact the DRHD](#) as early as possible if you plan for any food service or sales or special events where food or beverage will be served to the public. Share blueprints or plans so they can provide feedback before changes are made, equipment is purchased, etc.
- If your business involves public interaction with animals, [contact the DRHD](#) and learn more here: [Visiting Animals in Public Settings](#).

The following links are useful resources from the DRHD:

- [Notification of intent to open a food premises - Durham Region](#)
- [Special Events and Farmers Markets - Coordinators - Durham Region](#)
- [Special Events and Farmers Markets - Vendor - Durham Region](#)



## Business Licensing

You may be required to obtain a licence from the Townships to legally operate your business. This is commonly referred to as a business license. The following links provide more information, and you are encouraged to discuss this further with the Townships.

- [Township of Brock Business Licences and Permits](#)
- [Township of Scugog Business Licences and Permits](#)
- [Township of Uxbridge Business Licences](#)

## Local Agricultural Supports and Organizations

[Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association](#) is a membership-based organization representing farms and farm operators whose goal is to help local producers, and others committed to local food, market their local products to our local community.





# Agriculture-Related and On-Farm Diversified Business Checklists

As part of the pre-application process, please fill in the checklist below to the best of your ability. This is not a requirement of a formal application, but it will help the Region’s Staff and the Township planner to give you the best advice, work with you to reduce potential barriers, and help you to understand what regulations may apply to develop your proposed business. In summary, this is an important step to help streamline the application process and start your business sooner.

The information being requested is to help the Township determine what requirements might apply (or might not apply) to your proposed business, and to help you understand what information may be requested through the application process. If you do not know a specific answer, you may leave the response blank. Where the area or size is requested, you may make an estimate.

Is the property in active agricultural use? If so, what are the current agricultural uses on the property?

If there are existing agricultural buildings or structures on the property, what are they? (e.g. greenhouses, livestock facilities, grain storage, implement sheds, etc.)?

Is there a residence on the property that is proposed to be used, or partially used, for the proposed use? Yes      No

What types of existing land uses (activities/businesses) are on the property? If you are unsure, you may list all the uses that occur on the property. List all existing uses on the property and the area they occupy in square metres or hectares:

1. Existing Agricultural uses:



2. Existing agriculture-related uses:

3. Existing on-farm diversified uses:

4. Existing other uses (e.g., forest, wetland, utility corridor, easement, etc.):

What type of business or land use is being proposed? Describe the nature of the proposed use:

What are the surrounding/neighbouring properties uses (e.g. dairy farm, cash crops, farmers market, residences, wetland, settlement area, school, etc.)? Describe the neighbouring uses:

Some businesses might not be compatible with neighbouring uses because of the hours they operate. What are the proposed business hours/days of operation? Please note seasonal differences:

How much additional traffic is anticipated and how will it be accommodated?

Peak traffic per day (number of vehicles)

Average traffic per day (number of vehicles)



Describe how traffic will be managed:

What is the existing road infrastructure?

Is the road paved:            Yes            No

Describe the type of expected vehicle traffic generated by your proposed use (e.g. personal vehicles, agricultural vehicles, commercial vehicles, tractor trailers, etc.):

How will traffic access the site from the road? Describe the existing access(es):

Is the existing access appropriate for the proposed use, e.g., can it handle the expected volume of traffic and vehicle types?

If the existing access is not appropriate, please describe the changes to the existing access or the new access needed to accommodate the proposed use.

How will the potential impacts associated with this new use (activity) be avoided, minimized, and mitigated to be compatible with and enable normal farm practices? Impacts include the removal of land from agricultural production. Describe the potential adverse impacts to agricultural operations in the area and describe measures (e.g buffering, berms, traffic control, building design, etc.) for how they will be avoided, minimized, and mitigated:



How is the business related to and supportive of agricultural businesses in the area and benefits from close proximity to agricultural operations? Describe how the business supports agriculture in the area (e.g. farm equipment supplies/repairs, process local agricultural products, sell products grown in the area, distribute local agricultural products, etc.):

Is there an existing well and private sewage system or is a new private sewage system and well required to accommodate the proposed business?

**Re: Private sewage system:**

**1. Using the existing sewage system**

Was the sewage system permitted and inspected by Durham Region Health Department? Yes No

What use of the building was the sewage system designed for?

Note: A **Change of Use application** is required to evaluate the sewage system.

**2. Installing a new sewage system**

Have you consulted a qualified sewage system installer, designer, or engineer to discuss the proposal? Yes No

Note: **A Building Permit** for the new private sewage system is required from the Durham Region Health Department.

**Re: Well:**

Has well water previously been tested for bacteria? Yes No

Is there a treatment unit on the well? Yes No

**Continue if Your Proposed Business is Defined as an On-Farm Diversified Use**



Does the property have a valid Farm Business Registration (FBR) Number for the farm business that is run on the property? Yes No

Provide the Farm Business Registration Number (if applicable):

Note: If applicants are unable to obtain a valid FBR number, they may seek an exemption from **AgriCorp**.

If the property does not have a valid Farm Business Registration Number, does it have an exemption from AgriCorp? Yes No

What type of business is proposed on the property, and what land area would be occupied? If more than one business is proposed, please indicate and include information for each. List all proposed on-farm diversified use components and the area they would occupy:

Existing and proposed laneway area:

Existing and proposed parking area:

Area of existing and proposed buildings and structures: Outdoor use area (e.g. water and wastewater, landscaped area, playgrounds, storage, walkways, sitting areas, patio/picnic spaces, fire pits, etc.):

Total area for proposed on-farm diversified use m², % of property.

Area for an on-farm diversified use that occupies parts of the farm used by the agricultural use/farming can be discounted. 100% discount for laneways and parking areas, and 50% discount for buildings or structures that are older than ten years old at the time of application. What area is being shared by the existing agricultural use? List the amount of area for the proposed on-farm diversified use that is shared with the agricultural use:

Laneway Area: m² Parking Area: m²

Agricultural buildings area m²





Is the design of the proposed on-farm diversified use appropriate for the rural character of the farm and surrounding area? Describe measures to ensure the agricultural/rural character is maintained in the area:

Will you be preparing, selling, or serving food or beverage to the public?

Will you be allowing the public to interact with animals? Yes      No

If yes, please **Contact the Health Department - Durham Region** for guidance. The following resource provides information on animal interaction: **Visiting Animals in Public Settings.**

### Contacts

- ✉ Region of Durham Economic Development: [agriculture@durham.ca](mailto:agriculture@durham.ca)
- ✉ Township of Brock Development Services: [planning@brock.ca](mailto:planning@brock.ca)
- ✉ Township of Uxbridge Development Services: [building@uxbridge.ca](mailto:building@uxbridge.ca)
- ✉ Township of Scugog Planning and Development: [planning@scugog.ca](mailto:planning@scugog.ca)



The Regional Municipality of Durham  
Economic Development and Tourism  
🇨🇦 Durham Region, Ontario, Canada  
605 Rossland Road East Whitby, Ontario L1N 6A3

**1-800-706-9857**  
**InvestDurham.ca**

If this information is required in an accessible format, please call 1-800-706-9857 extension 2619.