

2.0

County Development Strategy

INTRODUCTION
AND PURPOSE

The County Development Strategy represents the fundamental planning principles on which the policies of this Official Plan are based. These fundamental principles provide the overall strategic direction to be applied to land use policy decisions throughout the County and are intended to be consistent with and, where appropriate to address matters of importance to the County's communities, expand upon the policy direction provided in the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement. Collectively the fundamental planning principles define a picture or vision of the future urban, rural, cultural, natural and economic environment desired for the County of Oxford.

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Further, the County Development Strategy is intended to reflect Oxford's commitment to the concept of sustainable development, which is an approach to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is a fundamental guiding principle of the County to consider the short and long-term environmental, community and economic consequences of actions related to land use planning, emphasizing both environmental and human wellbeing as essential ends in themselves.

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2.1 Planning Principles

2.1.1 Growth Management

In recognition of the importance of efficient land use and development patterns in supporting sustainability by promoting strong, livable, healthy and resilient communities, protecting the environment and public health and safety and facilitating economic growth, it is a principle of County Council to proactively plan, coordinate and stage growth and the provision of public service facilities and infrastructure to sustain financial well-being over the long term. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following strategic initiatives to manage growth:

FORECASTING
AND ALLOCATING
GROWTH

As directed by provincial policy, the County, in consultation with the Area Municipalities, will identify, coordinate and allocate population, housing and employment projections for the Area Municipalities; identify areas where growth or development will be directed; and identify minimum targets for *intensification* within all or any of the Area Municipalities.

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ACCOMMODATING GROWTH

Growth and development will be focused in *settlements* and their vitality and regeneration will be promoted.

A sufficient supply of land will be provided within *settlements* to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of residential and nonresidential growth, in accordance with the projected 20 year needs of the County and each of the Area Municipalities within the County, while accounting for opportunities to accommodate growth through *intensification*.

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PLANNING BEYOND 20 YEARS

Where deemed necessary or advisable by the County and affected Area Municipalities, planning for growth may extend beyond the current 20 year planning horizon to ensure sufficient lead time to complete municipal boundary adjustments, secondary planning or other studies that may be necessary to ensure a 20 year supply of growth land is maintained in each Area Municipality. However, no additional lands shall be designated to accommodate the forecast growth for each Area Municipality beyond the current 20 year planning horizon.

FULL SERVICES

The majority of growth will be directed to *settlements with centralized waste water and water supply facilities* to minimize risks of contamination to air, land, surface water and groundwater, to preserve agricultural land and to reduce the per capita and per unit costs of *public service facilities and infrastructure*. Limited *development on partial services* or private water and/or waste water services may be permitted, in accordance with the relevant policies of this Plan, provided that the site conditions are suitable for the long-term provision of such services with no *negative impacts*. Development on new private communal sewage services and/or water services will not be permitted.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PHASING

Detailed secondary plans will be required for *development in designated growth areas* and for *settlement expansions* to address the timing and staging of growth, including any phasing required to ensure achievement of intensification targets, the orderly progression of development and timely provision of infrastructure and public service facilities. In addition, secondary plans should address the location and mix of land uses, minimum and maximum development densities, *infrastructure and public service facilities* requirements and other land use considerations.

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Modifications or expansions to the boundaries of a *settlement* will only be considered and evaluated by the County as part of a *comprehensive review*, except where otherwise provided for in this Plan.

DEVELOPMENT
CHARGES

Development Charges will be used as a source of revenue to fund growth related capital costs associated with eligible services, as defined in the Development Charges Act, 1997, as amended. The County and Area Municipalities shall develop and maintain county-wide and area-specific background studies and Development Charges by-laws for growth-related capital projects anticipated based on approved population, household and employment projections.

LAND USE
PATTERNS, MIX OF
USES AND
DENSITY

Settlements will be required to develop with land use patterns, and a mix of uses and densities that efficiently use land and resources, are appropriate for, and efficiently use, existing or planned *infrastructure* and *public service facilities*, support *active transportation* and existing or planned *transit*, are *freight-supportive*, minimize *negative impacts* to air quality and climate change and promote energy efficiency. *Development* and land use patterns that would prevent the efficient expansion of *settlements*, in areas adjacent, or in close proximity to, *settlements*, will be avoided.

INTENSIFICATION

Intensification will be promoted in appropriate locations within *settlements*, particularly those serviced by *centralized wastewater and water supply facilities*, in accordance with the applicable policies of this Plan. A minimum target of 15 percent of all new residential dwelling units created within the Large Urban Centres shall occur by way of *residential intensification* over the planning period.

RANGE AND MIX OF
HOUSING

All forms of housing required to meet the social, health and well-being needs of current and future residents will be permitted and facilitated in appropriate locations throughout the County. A minimum target of 20 percent shall be established as the proportion of all housing in the County which is to be *affordable* housing.

INFRASTRUCTURE
AND PUBLIC
SERVICES

Planning for *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* shall be coordinated and integrated with land use planning so they are financially viable over their life-cycle and available to meet current and projected needs. Further, *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* shall be provided in a coordinated, efficient and cost effective manner that considers impacts from climate change.

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LAND USE
COMPATIBILITY

Major Facilities and *sensitive land uses* will be appropriately designed, buffered and/or separated from each other to prevent or mitigate *adverse effects* from odour, noise and other contaminants, minimize risk to public health and safety and protect the long-term viability of *major facilities*.

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2.1.2 Environmental and Cultural Integrity

In recognition that the quality of life for Oxford County residents is directly related to the integrity of natural systems (air, water, soil, wildlife and plants) and the built and cultural environment, it is a principle of County Council to ensure that *development, site alteration* and the use of land does not unreasonably affect and, wherever possible, enhances the natural, built and cultural environment. It is intended that this Plan will promote, protect and improve the state of the County's natural, built and cultural environment and the health and well-being of the residents of Oxford County through appropriate land use planning. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following strategic initiatives:

IDENTIFY A LINKED
NATURAL SYSTEM

Natural heritage features and areas will be identified and protected and a *natural heritage system* will be identified which links *natural heritage features and areas, surface water features, groundwater features*, natural corridors, parks and conservation areas, floodplains and other open space areas, while recognizing that such systems will vary in size and form within and outside *settlements*. The *natural heritage system* may also include lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions, and agricultural landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue.

PROTECTING THE
ENVIRONMENT
AND PUBLIC
HEALTH

Development and land use patterns that conserve biodiversity and consider the impacts of climate change will be promoted, while avoiding those that may cause environmental or public health and safety concerns.

IDENTIFY
CONSTRAINT
AREAS

Natural and human-made hazards to public health and safety are identified and land use controls and standards are incorporated to direct *development* to areas outside of such hazards where there is an unacceptable risk to public health or safety or property damage and not create new, or aggravate existing hazards. In circumstances where *development* might be acceptable, effective mitigation and/or remediation will be required prior to *development or site alteration*.

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INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Environmental considerations will be integrated into the land use planning and decision making processes to ensure that new *development* occurs where it has been demonstrated that there will be no *negative impacts* on *natural heritage features and areas* or their ecological functions and it is in accordance with applicable provincial and federal requirements. Wherever possible, the diversity and connectivity of *natural heritage features and areas* will be improved and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of the *natural heritage system* will be maintained, restored and, where possible, enhanced.

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NATURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS

The conservation, responsible use and management of natural resources such as *groundwater features* and *surface water features* and *natural heritage features and areas* will be undertaken to preserve ecological, economic and social benefits.

HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

Healthy, active communities will be promoted by: creating public streets and other public spaces that are safe, fostering social interaction and facilitating *active transportation* and community connectivity; and providing for a full range and equitable distribution of public recreational lands and facilities.

Barriers that restrict persons with disabilities and older persons from fully participating in society should be identified, prevented and removed to improve accessibility.

ENERGY CONSERVATION, AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation will be supported through compact land use and development patterns which promote the use of *active transportation* and transit as well as design and orientation that maximize energy efficiency and conservation and opportunities for the use of *alternative and/or renewable energy systems*.

CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The promotion of cultural heritage awareness and education will be achieved by ensuring *significant built heritage resources*, *significant cultural heritage landscapes* and *significant archeological resources* are *conserved* and, where possible, enhanced through appropriate planning and urban design measures.

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2.1.3 Protect Agriculture and Rural Natural Resources

In recognition of the high quality agricultural land and substantial mineral and environmental resources in the County which form the basis of the rural economy and, of the importance of rural resources to social and environmental well-being in the County, it is a principle of County Council to clearly define and make a distinction between urban and rural areas. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following strategic initiatives to protect agricultural and rural natural resources:

PRESERVE PRIME
AGRICULTURAL
LANDS

Prime agricultural areas will be designated, protected and preserved for current and future agricultural production and as a permanent, integral feature of the heritage of Oxford County.

PREVENT
INCOMPATIBLE
LAND USES

Land uses which are not compatible with agriculture and/or would hinder surrounding agricultural operations, or are more appropriately developed on *centralized waste water or water supply facilities*, shall be prevented from locating in *prime agricultural areas*.

MINERAL
EXTRACTION

The extraction of non-renewable resources including mineral aggregates, petroleum and gypsum deposits shall be undertaken in a manner which minimizes social, economic and environmental impacts. These resource areas and related operations will be identified and protected from *development* or activities to the extent possible, in the context of other legislative land use objectives, to ensure the expansion or continued use of such operations is not precluded or hindered and the resource remains available when required.

Extraction sites shall be rehabilitated in a manner that promotes land use compatibility, takes into consideration surrounding land uses and land use designations, mitigates *negative impacts* to the extent possible and ensures a *net environmental gain* is achieved. Extraction sites shall be rehabilitated to an *agricultural condition* wherever possible and proposed after-uses shall be in conformity with the applicable policies of the relevant land use designation. Comprehensive rehabilitation planning and timely and progressive rehabilitation are encouraged.

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2.1.4 Economic Competitiveness

In recognition of the importance of business development in generating employment and the necessary revenue to pay for *public service facilities* and amenities that enhance the quality of life for residents of the County of Oxford, it is a principle of County Council to maintain a business environment which assists existing businesses, attracts new businesses and which promotes entrepreneurial activity and opportunities for economic development and community investment readiness. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following strategic initiatives to maintain and enhance the County's economic competitiveness and long-term prosperity:

LAND SUPPLY,
RESOURCES,
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND PUBLIC
SERVICE
FACILITIES

A sufficient supply of land designated for employment purposes in strategic locations within *settlements* throughout the County will be provided to accommodate a range and mix of employment opportunities to meet projected need, including a surplus to ensure an efficient land market. The long-term availability and use of land, resources, *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* will be optimized.

REDESIGNATION
OF INDUSTRIAL
LAND

Employment lands will be protected and preserved for current and future use by permitting the re-designation of industrial land for non-industrial purposes only where it will not adversely affect the industrial land supply and the intended function of designated industrial areas. Where industrial lands are located within an *employment area*, re-designation for nonindustrial purposes shall only be considered through a *comprehensive review* where it has been demonstrated that the land is not required for industrial purposes over the long term and that there is a need for the redesignation, particularly in instances where such lands are located in proximity to *major goods movement facilities and corridors*.

PREVENT
CONFLICTS WITH
EMPLOYMENT
USES

Conflicts which may compromise business activity will be prevented by protecting lands designated for agriculture and other employment purposes from encroachment by non-compatible land uses.

LOCAL FOOD AND
PROTECTION OF
AGRICULTURE

Opportunities to support local food will be provided and sustainability of agri-food and agri-product businesses will be promoted by protecting agricultural resources and minimizing land use conflicts.

BROWNFIELDS
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The redevelopment of *brownfield sites* will be promoted, where it has been demonstrated that there will be no *adverse effects*.

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ENERGY, SUPPLY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Opportunities for increased energy supply to accommodate current and projected needs will be provided, including the use of *alternative and/or renewable energy systems*, where feasible and appropriate. The potential negative impacts from a changing climate on the built and natural environment and the local economy, and the potential measures to mitigate such impacts, will be considered, where feasible.

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TOURISM

A range of opportunities for sustainable tourism development throughout the County will be provided.

SMALL BUSINESS

In recognition of significant and on-going structural changes to the economy of Ontario and the increasing importance of small business for job creation, the policies of this Plan provide opportunities for small business development including home businesses.

RURAL EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Diversification of the economic base and employment opportunities will be promoted in rural areas by providing opportunities for goods and services, including value added products, and the sustainable management or use of resources. A range of opportunities for employment uses in rural *settlements* as well as for *on-farm diversified uses* and *agricultural related uses* in *prime agricultural areas* will be provided to increase the vitality of rural areas and to support agriculture as the principal land use activity in these areas.

IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWNS AND VILLAGE CORES

The importance of traditional downtown Central Business Districts and Village Core Areas as retail, administrative and business centres and *residential intensification* areas is recognized and policies are incorporated to maintain and, where possible, enhance the vitality, viability and planned function of these areas.

URBAN DESIGN AND CULTURAL PLANNING

Encourage a sense of place by promoting well designed built form and cultural planning, and by conserving features that help define character, including *heritage resources*.

DEVELOPMENT CHARGE EXEMPTIONS

Statutory and non-statutory exemptions to Development Charges for defined types of development may be used by the County and Area Municipalities as an incentive to promote *development*. Such exemptions may apply to the whole municipality or on an area-specific basis.

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2.1.5 Responsible Water and Waste Management

In recognition that there are finite supplies of potable groundwater in the County and adjacent municipalities and that there is a need to minimize the risks of contamination to air, land, surface water and groundwater from waste water and solid waste disposal and to maximize the use of existing water, waste water and solid waste management *infrastructure*, it is a principle of County Council to effectively manage water usage and waste disposal toward these ends. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following strategic initiatives to promote responsible water and waste management:

CROSS-
JURISDICTIONAL
INTEGRATION

The County will recognize the *watershed* as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated long-term planning and the need to integrate assessments and plans for the protection of *groundwater features* and *surface water features* and their *hydrologic functions* with adjacent municipalities. The County will strive to coordinate source protection measures with adjacent municipalities and conservation authorities with jurisdiction in the County through the Source Protection Plan process under the Clean Water Act.

PROTECT WATER
QUANTITY AND
QUALITY

The quality and quantity of water will be protected, improved and restored by identifying important *groundwater features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas* and *surface water features*, maintaining the linkages and related functions among such features and minimizing potential *negative impacts* from single, multiple or successive *development or site alteration* activities.

Necessary restrictions on *development* and *site alteration* will be implemented to protect municipal drinking water supplies and *designated vulnerable areas* (i.e. well head protection areas, highly vulnerable aquifers and significant recharge/discharge areas) and to protect, improve or restore vulnerable surface water and ground water, sensitive *surface water features*, sensitive *groundwater features* and their *hydrological functions*. This will be accomplished primarily by ensuring all land use planning decisions are consistent with the policies contained in applicable Source Protection Plans approved under the Clean Water Act and by establishing additional land use planning measures and/or mitigative measures where deemed necessary and/or appropriate.

LIMITED USE OF
SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Consistent with the County's Growth Management Strategy, the majority of growth in the County will occur on *centralized waste water treatment* services with the limited use of individual septic systems in agricultural areas and unserved *settlements* only where such *development* is considered environmentally safe.

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PLANNING FOR
SEWAGE AND
WATER SERVICES

Expected growth and development shall be directed and accommodated in a manner that promotes efficient use and optimization of existing *centralized water* and/or *centralized waste water treatment services*. Such services will be provided in a manner that: can be sustained by the water resources on which said services rely; promotes water conservation and water use efficiency; is feasible, financially viable and complies with all regulatory requirements; and protects human health and the natural environment.

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STORMWATER
MANAGEMENT

Stormwater management will be planned to minimize, or where possible, prevent increases in contaminant loads, minimize changes in water balance and erosion, not increase risks to human health and safety and property damage, maximize the extent and function of vegetative and pervious surfaces, and incorporate stormwater management best practices.

CONSERVER
SOCIETY

The concept of a conserver society based on the prudent, efficient and sustainable use of resources will be promoted, together with the principles of reducing, reusing, recycling and recovering resources. Water conservation and solid waste reduction in accordance with these principles will be supported as the first order of priority before establishing new *infrastructure* and/or *public service facilities*. The implications of development and land use patterns on waste generation, management and diversion will be considered as part of the planning process.

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WASTE
MANAGEMENT

Waste management systems of an appropriate size, type and location shall be provided to meet the present and future requirements of County residents, business and industry. Such systems will be designed in a manner that facilitates, encourages and promotes reduction, reuse, recycling and recovery and will be located and designed in accordance with provincial legislation and standards and in consideration of the needs of the County.

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2.1.6 Transportation Systems and Corridors

In recognition of the importance of providing a transportation network which facilitates the movement of people and goods throughout the County and beyond, it is a principle of County Council to develop a safe, efficient, cost effective and reliable *multimodal transportation system* that is appropriate to address current and projected needs. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following strategic initiatives relating to transportation:

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PROVIDE FOR
ALTERNATIVE
TRANSPORTATION
MODES
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Various opportunities will be provided for the use of transportation modes other than the private automobile, including *active transportation*, public transit and rail.

NETWORK
IMPROVEMENTS

Major improvements necessary to increase the functionality and safety of the transportation networks within the County will be identified. Planned corridors and *major goods movement facilities and corridors* shall be protected from *development* that could preclude or negatively affect the use of the corridor for its intended purpose.

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EFFICIENT USE

Efficient use shall be made of existing and planned transportation *infrastructure*. Freight-intensive land uses will be focused in areas well served by major highways, airports and *rail facilities*.

SUPPORT ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION
AND TRANSIT

Opportunities to minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support existing and planned transit and *active transportation* will be provided by promoting land use and development patterns, densities and mix of uses which support such transportation options and by ensuring good pedestrian linkages to transit services and other major services and amenities through the *development* review process.

AIRPORTS AND
RAIL FACILITIES

Airports and *rail facilities* will be protected from incompatible land uses and *development* and such facilities and *sensitive land uses* will be appropriately designed, buffered and/or separated from each other.

PROTECTION OF
CORRIDORS AND
RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Corridors and rights-of-way for *infrastructure* will be planned for and protected. The preservation or reuse of abandoned corridors for purposes that maintain the corridor's integrity and linear characteristics will be encouraged, where feasible. In particular, rail lines will be considered for their possible use for *infrastructure*, environmental, recreational or cultural purposes.

TRANSPORTATION
CONNECTIONS

Connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes will be maintained and, where possible, improved. The integration of road, pedestrian and cycle networks between Area Municipalities as well as with the services and facilities provided by adjacent municipalities, the private sector, and senior levels of government (transit, rail and highways) will be promoted.

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2.1.7 Public Participation

In recognition of the importance of ensuring that the public is kept informed and has the timely opportunity to provide input and become involved in land use planning decision making processes, it is a principle of County Council that public participation be an integral component of all planning decisions. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following strategic initiatives to facilitate public participation:

RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES

The requirement to provide a wide range of opportunities for individuals and interest groups in the community to express opinions on planning issues associated with Official Plan amendments and review initiatives, secondary planning, monitoring exercises and *development* and zoning matters.

PROVIDE INFORMATION

A commitment to provide the public with accurate information in a timely manner.

CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC RESPONSE

The requirement to consider any response from the public and interest groups and to ensure such opinion is considered in the development of planning policy and in *development* and zoning matters.

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2.1.8 Monitoring

In recognition of the importance of periodically evaluating the effectiveness of Official Plan policies to ensure that the objectives, strategic direction and policies remain responsive to changing circumstances and reflective of community desires, it is a principle of County Council to require systematic monitoring. Accordingly, this Plan incorporates the following monitoring initiatives:

OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW

A commitment to review all or part of the Official Plan every five years.

UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

A commitment to maintain up-to-date information relating to population, household and employment forecasts, land supply, *intensification*, affordability, servicing capacities and *natural heritage* information.

ON-GOING MONITORING

A commitment to ensure the on-going monitoring and evaluation of policies is established as an integral component of the Official Plan.

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GEOGRAPHIC
INFORMATION
SYSTEM

A commitment to maintaining and enhancing the County's geographic information system as a means of optimizing the co-ordination and sharing of information between the County, Area Municipalities and other agencies, for providing easy public access to spatial land use information and for other purposes such as planning analysis and policy formulation.

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2.1.9 Coordination

The County of Oxford abuts several municipalities as illustrated in Figure 1. Past experience has indicated that the Councils of Oxford and adjacent municipalities are generally able to work together to develop mutually satisfactory planning objectives and effective policies for dealing with key planning matters that span upper tier municipal boundaries. The County has had similar experience in dealing with other levels of government, agencies and boards. As such, the County fully supports perpetuating the current cooperative approach to addressing multi-jurisdictional planning matters in a coordinated, integrated and comprehensive manner, including consultation with aboriginal communities on relevant planning matters.

Further, the policies of this Plan provide specific direction to ensure key planning matters that may cross Area Municipal boundaries, both within and outside the County, are appropriately coordinated and addressed. Such matters include: protecting and managing growth and development; addressing housing needs; protecting and managing natural and cultural heritage resources; planning for *infrastructure, public service facilities and waste management systems*; and addressing natural and human-made hazards.

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