

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Community Planning

2021 Census Data Release and Related Growth Updates

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That County Council receive Report No. CP 2022-78 for information;
2. And further, that Report No. CP 2022-78 be circulated to the Area Municipalities for information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The report provides a brief overview of the findings from the first 2021 Census Data Release (i.e. Population and Dwelling Counts), together with a comparison to the 2016 Census and current County and Area Municipal growth forecasts (i.e. County of Oxford Phase 1 Comprehensive Review, Hemson 2020) and initial planning staff observations.
- The data in this first release indicates that the County and most of the Area Municipalities in the County, have experienced substantial growth since the last Census was conducted in 2016, and are among some of the fastest growing municipalities in Southwestern Ontario.

Implementation Points

The 2021 Census releases are being monitored by planning staff and will be reviewed and compiled in preparation for formal updates to the County and Area Municipal growth forecasts to be initiated in early 2023. This Census information will also be used to update the County's demographic and statistical profile and inform various County and Area Municipal projects and initiatives.

Financial Impact

No immediate implications beyond this year's approved budget.

Communications

No specific communications beyond this report to County Council (and circulation to the Area Municipalities for their information) and updating the County’s website to reflect the 2021 Census Population and Dwelling Count data, which is already underway.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
		3.ii. 3.iii.	4.i. 4.ii.		

DISCUSSION

Background

The first data set from the 2021 Census (Population and Dwelling Counts) was released on February 9th, 2022. The purpose of this report is simply to provide Council with a brief overview of the findings from this first data release and some initial planning staff observations.

Commentary

The following commentary provides an overview of the findings from the first 2021 Census release, together with a high level comparison to the 2016 Census and the current growth forecasts for the County and Area Municipalities (i.e. County Phase 1 Comprehensive Review, Hemson 2020).

a) Comparison of 2016 and 2021 Census Population and Dwellings Data

Municipality	2016 Census Population ¹	2021 Census Population	% Change	2016 ² Total Dwellings	2021 ² Total Dwellings	% Change
Woodstock	41,098	46,705	13.6%	17,601	19,528	10.9%
Tillsonburg	15,872	18,615	17.3%	7,297	8,494	16.4%
Ingersoll	12,757	13,693	7.3%	5,192	5,627	8.4%
Blandford-Blenheim	7,399	7,565	2.2%	2,817	2,857	1.4%
East Zorra-Tavistock	7,113	7,841	10.2%	2,769	3,055	10.3%
Norwich	10,835	11,151	2.9%	3,766	3,892	3.3%
South-West Oxford	7,634	7,583	-0.7%	2,742	2,708	-1.2%
Zorra	8,138	8,628	6%	3,161	3,284	3.9%
Oxford County	110,846	121,781	9.9%	45,345	49,455	9.0%

Table Notes:

- ¹ The 2016 Census population and dwellings were adjusted by Stats Can for Woodstock, Norwich and SWOX (i.e. to reflect recent changes in their municipal boundaries) and for East Zorra-Tavistock (to reflect a minor adjustment with Perth East). Note: the 2016 dwelling corrections are not shown in the Census profile tables.
- ² Total Private Dwellings (i.e. includes occupied and unoccupied dwellings and dwellings occupied by foreign/temporary residents). Would include vacant units and recently constructed units that were not yet occupied at the time the census was conducted.

The 2021 Census release also provided population growth data for a number of 'population centres' in the County (i.e. larger settlements/built up areas that are not a separate municipality). For example: Thamesford 23.9%, Norwich 6.5% and Tavistock 7.3%.

b) Comparison of 2021 Census Population & Dwellings to Current Growth Forecasts

Municipality	2021 Census Population (Adjusted) ¹	2021 Population Forecast ²	Variation (%)	2021 Census Occupied Dwellings ⁴	2021 Household Forecast ²	Variation (%)
Woodstock	47,965	46,620 ³	-1,345 (-2.8%)	18,886	19,140	+254 (+1.3%)
Tillsonburg	19,120	17,380	-1,740 (-9.1%)	8,229	7,640	-589 (-7.1%)
Ingersoll	14,065	14,240	+175 (+1.2%)	5,467	5,580	+113 (+2.1%)
Blandford-Blenheim	7,770	7,980	+210 (+2.7%)	2,779	2,890	+111 (+4%)
East Zorra-Tavistock	8,050	7,940	-110 (-1.4%)	2,976	2,990	+14 (+0.5%)
Norwich	11,450	11,850 ³	+400 (+3.5%)	3,761	3,940	+179 (+4.8%)
South-West Oxford	7,785	8,140 ³	+355 (+4.5%)	2,616	2,810	+194 (+7.4%)
Zorra	8,860	8,740	-120 (-1.4%)	3,162	3,240	+78 (+2.5%)
Oxford County	125,070	122,890	-2,180 (-1.7%)	47,876	48,240	+364 (+0.8%)

Table Notes:

- ¹ As the official final 2021 undercount adjustment will not be available until late 2023, planning staff have adjusted the 2021 Census population figures by 2.7% (i.e. the adjustment factor for undercount used in the 2021 County population forecasts) to provide for a quick comparison of the 2021 Census and forecasted populations.
- ² These forecasted population and household figures are from the County Phase 1 Comprehensive Review (Hemson, 2020)
- ³ The area municipal population changes (i.e. gain/loss) resulting from the recent Woodstock municipal boundary adjustments with Norwich and South-West Oxford were not accounted for in the Hemson population forecasts.
- ⁴ Private Dwellings Occupied by Usual Residents (i.e. is the dwellings the population data relates to, so is the figure used for the household growth forecasts)

c) Initial Observations

Planning staff regularly monitor Ministry of Finance forecasts, inter-censal estimates, building permit and development trends etc., so there was nothing particularly unexpected in this first census release. The one exception is the decrease in population and total dwellings in South-West Oxford, which planning staff will be reviewing further internally and potentially following up on with Statistics Canada to confirm/investigate.

That said, following are some initial observations from a quick review of the data:

- Oxford as a whole, and a number of the area municipalities, experienced some of the highest percentage population growth in southwestern Ontario. Some sample municipal comparators are as follows:

Municipality	Percentage Change
Town of Milton	20.7%
City of London	10%
Waterloo Region	9.7%
• City of Kitchener	10.1%
• City of Waterloo	15.7%
• City of Cambridge	6.6%
Middlesex County	9.2%
• Thames Centre	6%
• Lucan Biddulph	20.9%
• Town of Strathroy	10.7%
City of Guelph	9.1%
Brant (incl. Brantford)	7.4%
• Paris	20.7%
• City of Brantford	6.2%
Elgin County	6.5%
• City of St. Thomas	10.1%
• Rest of Elgin County	3.7%
Perth (incl. Stratford/St. Mary's)	6.2%
• City of Stratford	5.6%
• Town of St. Mary's	1.7%
City of Hamilton	6.0%
Norfolk County	5.4%

- The variation between the rate of population growth and dwelling unit growth in the County and a number of the area municipalities seems to suggest that average household sizes are increasing. If so, that is a matter that will need to be carefully considered as part of any upcoming forecast updates (i.e. is it simply a short term anomaly due to Covid, or an emerging trend).
- The variation in the number of total private dwellings versus dwellings occupied by usual residents may be partially due to recent building activity in the County (i.e. total dwellings is capturing recently constructed units that were not yet occupied at the time of the Census). This will be examined further as part of any forecast updates.

- Planning staff review of residential building permits issued since the 2021 Census was conducted suggest that, overall, rates of population and dwelling unit growth in the County appear to be continuing and/or increasing, however, with considerable variation between area municipalities.
- Recent growth in some of the Area Municipalities has likely been limited to some extent by shorter term constraints, such as lot availability and/or servicing capacity. As such, recent levels of growth may not necessarily be fully indicative of expected future growth (i.e. once those limitations have been addressed).

Planning staff will be closely following the Census data releases over the remainder of the year, as much of that data (e.g. broader population demographics, household composition, employment, migration etc.) will be key to understanding how the County is changing and informing upcoming growth forecast updates and other County and Area Municipal plans and initiatives (i.e. Master Plans, Housing Strategies etc.)

Next Steps

Planning staff will be continuing to monitor the 2021 Census data releases (which are scheduled over the course of 2022), as well as ongoing building and development trends. This information will be compiled and organized so that it can feed into the formal updates to the County and Area Municipal growth forecasts (currently to be initiated beginning of 2023, once all the relevant 2021 Census data is available) to ensure they are as informed and accurate as possible. As in the past, the forecast updates will be undertaken by a qualified consultant on behalf of the County and take into consideration a full spectrum of relevant provincial, regional and local data and other information (i.e. 2021 Census data, development/building activity, economic, market, social trends etc.) as identified through planning staff review and consultation with each of the area municipalities.

Conclusions

This report provides an initial overview of the findings from the first 2021 Census data release and initial planning staff observations. Planning staff will be continuing to monitor future releases and will update Council as required. Further, once of the necessary information has been released, it will be used to inform formal updates to the County and Area Municipal growth forecasts planned for initiation in early 2023.

SIGNATURES

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