

10. Rural Area and Agriculture

The Rural Area has been a significant component of the Sault ever since the amalgamation with the townships of Korah and Tarentorus in the 1960s. Farming and rural residential uses occupy many of the lots in the Rural Area, but conservation uses and aggregate extraction cover most of the land in the Rural Area. The portions of the Rural Area closest to the urban, built-up areas of the Sault also act as a land bank for potential future urban development.

What We Know

Key Points

- The Rural Area comprises approximately 16,000 hectares (40,000 acres) and around three-quarters of the Sault's total land mass.
- There is increasing recognition and desire to support local agriculture and local food, including the production, processing and distribution of food.
- The number of active farms in Sault Ste. Marie has varied between approximately 25 and 35 farms since 2006. Based on Statistics Canada data, agriculture activity in Sault Ste. Marie accounts for 7% to 10% of the agriculture activity in the entire Algoma District.
- The Province and many municipalities permit a variety of 'on-farm diversified uses' to support farm operators.
- Maple syrup production is a growing sector in Algoma and Sault Ste. Marie, and there is interest and potential for maple syrup harvesting in the Sault's Precambrian Uplands.
- Rural living is an attractive option for many residents. Approximately 10% of Sault Ste. Marie's population lives outside of the city's urban area. Over the past two decades, about one quarter of all new dwellings were constructed in the Sault's Rural Area compared to the Sault's urban area, though this proportion has decreased in the past few years in favour of the urban area.
- The Sault Ste. Marie Airport is a significant land use and activity hub in the city's Rural Area, encompassing 735 hectares and supporting approximately 300 jobs. There are various regulations aimed at ensuring development within and near the Airport lands is compatible and does not hinder Airport operations.

Land Use in Sault Ste. Marie's Rural Area

Sault Ste. Marie's Rural Area is primarily defined by the Urban Settlement Area in the Official Plan — all lands outside of the Urban Settlement Area are considered to be in the Rural Area. **Sault Ste. Marie's Rural Area comprises approximately 16,000 hectares (40,000 acres) and around three-quarters of the Sault's total land mass.** The Rural Area contains approximately 12% of all property parcels in the city.

There are a variety of land uses that exist in Sault Ste. Marie's Rural Area, including:

- The **Precambrian Uplands**, defined as all lands north of the Precambrian Shield Line formed by the first exposed outcroppings of the Uplands' bedrock. This is an environmentally sensitive area where only conservation uses are allowed.

- **Aggregate extraction** lands located just below the Precambrian Shield Line. Aggregate extraction is a significant use in the Rural Area. Local pits occupy 1,288 hectares (3,184 acres) or about 8% of the Rural Area. These lands are designated as containing sand and gravel deposits where extraction may occur. A more detailed discussion on aggregate extraction uses can be found in the [Natural Environment, Resources and Constraints Chapter](#).
- **Conservation Areas** owned by the Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority — specifically, the Hiawatha Highlands, Mark's Bay and Shore Ridges Conservation Areas.
- Other **parks and recreation** lands, such as private golf courses like Crimson Ridge and Root River, and campgrounds like Mark's Bay.
- The **Sault Ste. Marie Airport** and its associated industrial and commercial uses.
- **Rural residences**, including multiple rural estate subdivisions such as Parkewood and Palomino, but also a few urban-style (smaller lots) subdivisions such as McQueen and along People's Road. The Pointes area and Sunnyside Beach area, both located near the Airport, are particularly popular rural, waterfront residential areas. There are also three mobile home parks located in the Rural Area.
- A variety of **agricultural uses** including greenhouses, fruit and vegetable farms, horse farms and hay farming.
- There are also a limited number of other commercial and industrial uses, such as contractors' yards and salvage yards.

Table 10.1: Statistics on Selected Land Uses in the Rural Area.

Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.

Use	Land area	Proportion of the Rural Area
Precambrian Uplands	5,124 hectares (12,662 acres)	31.5%
Conservation Areas Hiawatha Highlands, Mark's Bay and Shore Ridges	1,438 hectares (3,554 acres)	8.9%
Aggregate extraction area Based on properties currently zoned Rural Aggregate Extraction zone (REX).	1,288 hectares (3,184 acres)	7.9%
Farm use properties Based on property assessment data — these are not necessarily 'active' farm businesses.	1,159 hectares (2,864 acres)	7.1%
Residential uses Rural residential properties zoned R1 (Estate Residential), R2 (Single Detached Residential) or R3 (Low Density Residential); not including mobile home parks.	761 hectares (1,881 acres)	4.7%
Airport lands	735 hectares (1,816 acres)	4.5%
Total rural land area	16,242 hectares (40,135 acres)	73% of total city land area

Agriculture in the Rural Area and Local Food

Agriculture is a quintessential rural land use. According to 2019 taxation data from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC):

- **93 properties** in Sault Ste. Marie are **classified as "farm" use properties**, not including properties that are sub-classified as managed forests or vacant farm land.
 - These 93 properties occupy **1,159 hectares (2,864 acres)** of land.
 - 7 of these properties are located within the current Urban Settlement Area, though all are located at the edge of the urban area (for example, near Allen's Side Road and Second Line West). They occupy 66 hectares (162 acres) of land.
 - The other 86 properties are located in the Rural Area of Sault Ste. Marie outside of the Urban Settlement Area, and occupy 1,094 hectares (2,702 acres) of land.
- **35 of the 93 properties** are taxed under the **Farm Property Class Tax Rate Program** for the 2019 tax year, and these occupy **489 hectares (1,209 acres)** of land.

Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture found that in 2016, there were **490 hectares (1,212 acres) of actively farmed land and a total of 25 active farms** in the City of Sault Ste. Marie, Prince Township and Batchewana First Nation's Rankin Reserve combined. Census of Agriculture data also show that agriculture activity in the Sault Ste. Marie area accounts for **7% to 10% of agriculture activity in the Algoma District**. This percentage is based on the number of farms (25 vs. 280), number of farm operators (30 vs. 420) and total farm revenues (\$1.6 million vs. \$16.4 million).

Global warming may have a variety of impacts to local agricultural production. Positives include a longer growing season and the potential to grow additional crops that historically may not have thrived this far north. Negatives include the potential for more severe weather that can damage crops, such as longer drought periods, more intense rain and windstorms. Climate change is discussed further in the [Urban Design and Mobility Chapter](#).

Over the past two decades, a number of farms east of Sault Ste. Marie have been purchased by Amish and Mennonite farmers relocating primarily from Southern Ontario. A main factor driving their migration north is relatively low land costs relative to Southern Ontario.

There is increasing recognition and desire to support local agriculture and local food. In 2019, the Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN) published the results of their *North Central Ontario Food and Agricultural Market Study*²⁶ that gauged interest and support for local food.

- There is significant interest among businesses and organizations in procuring locally grown or harvested foods. In the Algoma District, 63% of businesses and organizations surveyed expressed interest.
- The definition of "local food" varies, with around 36% of survey respondents defining "local" as restricted to Algoma District and 33% defining "local" as anywhere within Ontario. The study also noted that survey respondents in urban centres, such as Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury, tend to have a broader definition for "local food" than those in smaller communities.
- The most common motivations for businesses and organizations to procure local food are: local food contributes to the local economy, perception that local food is of higher quality and customer demand for local food.

²⁶ Available at: <http://rainalgoma.ca/marketstudy/>

- The most common challenges cited by businesses and organizations in procuring local food are: high cost, lack of volume and seasonality.

While supporting local agriculture is an important concern, planning for commercial agriculture may be more effective and practical at the regional scale rather than at the municipal level.

Another component of local agriculture and local food that has received significant interest is **urban agriculture**. There are a number of groups in Sault Ste. Marie working towards the creation of more food-growing, small-scale agriculture operations within the Sault's urban neighbourhoods, such as community, backyard and rooftop gardens.

Table 10.2: Farming in Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture (2016 and 2006).

	Sault Ste. Marie, Prince Township and Rankin Reserve (Batchewana First Nation)		Algoma District total	
	2006	2016	2006	2016
Farms by type				
Total number of farms	35	25	335	280
Farms in animal production	14	4	175	111
Farms in fruit and vegetable farming	4	9	17	26
Farms in greenhouse, nursery and floriculture	8	7	22	18
Farms in other crop farming (mostly hay)	9	5	121	125
Land area				
Total active farm area	1,029 ha (2,543 ac)	490 ha (1,212 ac)	38,775 ha (95,814 ac)	30,071 ha (74,307 ac)
Land in crops — excluding Christmas trees	424 ha (1,048 ac)	178 ha (441 ac)	15,496 ha (38,292 ac)	11,907 ha (29,423 ac)
Farm operators and revenues				
Number of farm operators	50	30	480	420
Average age of farm operators	56.8	55.5	53.9	53.9
Total farm revenues (in year prior to census)	\$2.0 million	\$1.6 million	\$20.1 million	\$16.4 million

	Sault Ste. Marie, Prince Township and Rankin Reserve (Batchewana First Nation)		Algoma District total	
	2006	2016	2006	2016
Selling of products directly to consumers				
Total number of farms that sold directly	n/a	12	n/a	109
Farms that sold unprocessed products	n/a	11	n/a	107
Farms that sold value-added products	n/a	3	n/a	11
Farms that sold using farm gate sales, stands, kiosks, U-pick	n/a	9	n/a	102
Farms that sold using farmers' markets	n/a	4	n/a	32

Maple Syrup Production

There is strong demand for maple syrup and related products as evidenced by Federal and Provincial programs aimed at supporting increased maple syrup production. At the regional level, RAIN operates the *Advancing Northern Maple Program* which aims to expand the maple sector by enabling producers to increase production, grow markets, adopt new technology and create innovative maple products. Attending a sugar shack to enjoy fresh locally produced maple syrup is an annual spring tradition for many and a number of maple syrup producers have added food services, on-site retail and public tours to expand the overall experience and generate additional revenues.

There are numerous mature sugar maple tree stands (sugar bushes) in Sault Ste. Marie, primarily located in the Precambrian Uplands area. Current land use policies permit harvesting maple sap, so long as there are no buildings or structures. The result is a number of small-scale hobby operations occurring in the Precambrian Uplands, without permanent on-site boiling facilities. Larger-scale producers would require permanent on-site facilities. Through the Shape the Sault consultation process, a number of people recommended that larger-scale maple syrup production be permitted in the Precambrian Uplands area. From an environmental standpoint, maple syrup harvesting is a low impact use. Mature trees can be tapped for a number of years without impacting the overall health of the tree. Furthermore, any buildings or structures would be generally small in scale. The main concern is that of access. There are very few roads in the Precambrian Uplands area and most of the properties are landlocked. Access is generally obtained through various forms of easements and agreements, some of which may be informal.

Any policies supporting larger-scale maple syrup harvesting with on-site production must consider formal, described access easements. Furthermore, policies should be designed to ensure that such uses do not result in future development requests, such as accessory food services or some other type of public access in association with a maple syrup operation. Given that any future access would likely be by way of registered private easements, public access is not appropriate and therefore accessory

uses such as food services and on-site retail would be difficult to locate in the Rural Precambrian Uplands area.

The Local Food System

The food system consists of production, processing, distribution and consumption — ‘farm to table’. The local food system consists of the same elements, but at the local level. A robust local food system is a secure local food system. Supporting the local food system has numerous economic, social, health and recreational benefits.

Production and processing are the elements of the local food system where Official Plan policies can have the greatest impact. Local food production includes small and medium scale rural agriculture and micro-scale urban agriculture, in the form of backyard, rooftop and community gardens. Provincial policies allow municipalities to permit a variety of ‘on-farm diversified uses’ in association with registered farm properties. On-farm diversified uses may or may not relate to the production or processing of food. Generally, these uses are appropriately located on the relatively large acreages generally associated with farms, and they do not take away from the main agricultural use. Examples include processing and selling locally grown products, ‘agri-tourism’, food services, weddings and banquets, outdoor and indoor storage of RVs and boats, small-scale custom manufacturing and potentially contractors’ yards. Such uses are intended to offer small-scale farmers additional income generation opportunities.

Most municipalities also have policies that support private and community gardens. In the case of community gardens, many municipalities specifically support them to locate on public properties, such as underutilized park space. A local example is Forest Heights Community Garden, located on a portion of Forest Heights Park. Urban agriculture in terms of the keeping of small livestock in an urban area is also something that is becoming more acceptable in a number of municipalities. While it is recognized that small-scale urban agriculture is not sufficient to feed everybody, there are numerous social, educational and recreational benefits. For example, small-scale urban agriculture allows one to clearly see and understand where their food comes from, and the effort required to produce this food. In addition, community gardens offer members numerous social and recreational benefits.

Within the regional context, selling and processing are the elements where the Official Plan can have an impact. It is generally recognized that the greatest regional production capacity exists in the larger farms located east of Sault Ste. Marie. As the regional centre for Algoma, Sault Ste. Marie contains the largest market (selling element) for local food. Many municipalities, including Sault Ste. Marie permit small ‘roadside produce stands’ to locate either on an agricultural property or along a commercial corridor. While these small retail outlets are intended to sell food produced ‘locally’, it is difficult to limit such uses to selling locally produced foods only. Traditionally, municipalities have also played a role in supporting local farmers markets, whether it be through funding or the provision of space. Locally, there are two farmers markets, Mill Market Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma Farmers Market. Both markets are coordinated by a board of directors and registered as non-profit organizations. Both markets are members of the umbrella group Farmers’ Markets Ontario.

As a regional centre, Sault Ste. Marie contains the necessary infrastructure to support and develop a wide variety of facilities to store, process and distribute food produced throughout the region. As previously discussed, many municipalities permit a variety of ‘on-farm diversified uses’, including

processing and storage facilities that may import goods to process that were not produced on the farm in which the facilities are located.

Food Security and Food Banks

According to the Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Round Table's *Progress on Impact Report* (January 2020)²⁷, food security is the ability to attain affordable and accessible nutritious food to meet dietary needs for a productive and healthy life. An individual's ability to adopt a healthy diet largely depends on the affordability, availability and proximity of healthy foods within the area they live. Households' failure to afford nutritious food is primarily associated with financial constraints. Promoting food security programs to facilitate community engagement, awareness and local efforts can be an effective way to deal with food insecurity.

Food banks are an important element of food security, and they provide food for the most vulnerable. Wikipedia defines food banks as *"a non-profit, charitable organization that distributes food to those who have difficulty purchasing enough to avoid hunger. Some food banks operate on the 'front line' model, giving out food directly to the hungry[...] Others operate on the 'warehouse' model, supplying food to intermediaries like food pantries, soup kitchens and other front-line organisations."*

Locally, United Way's Harvest Algoma Food Resource Centre fits into the 'warehouse' model and is capable of accepting, storing and distributing larger quantities of food to local and regional food banks and other non-profit organizations. According to the Poverty Round Table's report, Harvest Algoma provides food to 26 locations throughout Sault Ste. Marie.

Local 'front line' food banks include:

- Soup Kitchen Community Centre.
- Salvation Army Food Bank.
- St. Vincent Place.
- Sault College Food Bank.

In many cases, food banks (both warehouse and front line) offer much more than just food. Many include a number of accessory food-related programs such as a 'community kitchen', prepared meals, food literacy courses, greenhouses and community gardens, to name a few.

²⁷ Available at: <https://saultstemarie.ca/Newsroom/February-2020/Sault-Ste-Marie-Poverty-Round-Table-Progress-on-Im.aspx>

Rural Residential Development

Census data show that approximately 10% of Saultites live in the Sault's Rural Area.

Table 10.3: Sault Ste. Marie's Rural and Urban Population.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

	Rural		Urban ("population centre")	
	Population	Proportion of entire city	Population	Proportion of entire city
Population	7,055	9.6 %	66,313	90.4 %
Private dwellings	2,929	8.5 %	31,556	91.5 %
Land area	170.19 km ² (42,055 acres)	76.2 %	53.05 km ² (13,109 acres)	23.8 %
Population density	41.5 per km ²	n/a	1,250.1 per km ²	n/a

Figure 10.2: Statistics Canada's Defined Urban "Population Centre" for Sault Ste. Marie.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.



Between 2000 and 2019, approximately one-quarter of all new dwellings were constructed in the Rural Area. However, since 2015, the proportion of new dwellings in the Rural Area has decreased.

Table 10.4: Urban vs. Rural Dwelling Units Created between 2000 and 2019.

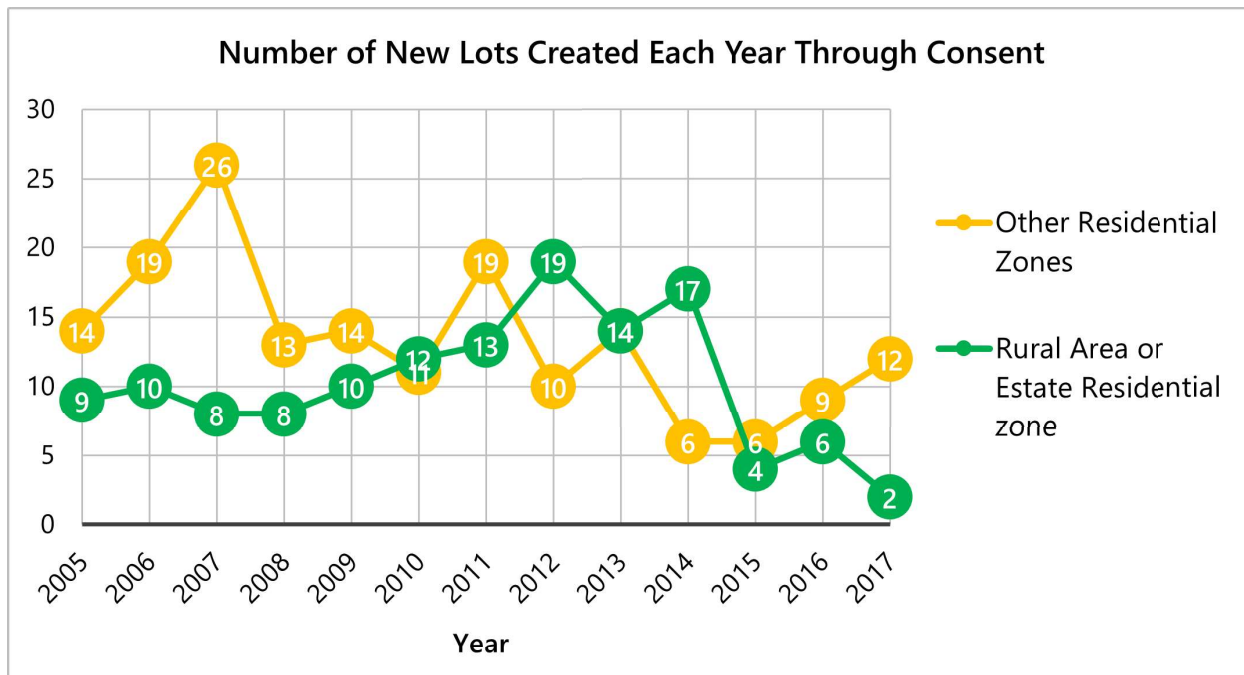
Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.

	Dwelling units created			
	Rural	Urban	% Rural	% Urban
2000–2004	117	355	24.8 %	75.2 %
2005–2009	165	452	26.7 %	73.3 %
2010–2014	192	489	28.2 %	71.8 %
2015–2019	103	500	17.1 %	82.9 %
Grand total	577	1796	24.3 %	75.7 %

Between 2005 and 2017 there were an average of 10 new rural lots created each year that were zoned either Rural Area (RA) or Estate Residential (R1). The majority of these new lots were created for rural residential purposes. In contrast, during the same time period, there were an average of 13 new lots created per year that were zoned for other, urban forms of residential development. Rural lot creation peaked between 2012 and 2014 with around 16 new lots created per year, and subsequently dropped to around 4 new lots per year between 2015 and 2017.

Figure 10.3: Creation of New Lots in Sault Ste. Marie from 2005 to 2017 Through Consent.

Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.



Locally Appropriate Rural Residential Development

Provincial policy requires rural residential development and lot creation to occur in a manner that is ‘locally appropriate’. Prior to 2020, the Province required that rural residential development be ‘limited’ in nature. Although neither ‘locally appropriate’ nor ‘limited’ are defined, Provincial policy clearly aims to direct the majority of development to lands within the Urban Settlement Area.

Impacts associated with rural residential development is a recurring theme. Large rural lots are divided into smaller lots with less potential for future developments. In addition, the rural residence is classified as a “sensitive use” which can sterilize an area around them and impact the ability for agricultural and aggregate uses to locate or expand. The relatively low density of rural residential development is also costlier to service than that of urban residential development.

All that said, there is certainly a place for rural residential development, albeit on a locally appropriate, limited basis. The opportunity for a rural residential lifestyle is appealing to many, hence limited development will continue to be supported. Limiting rural residential development also helps to maintain the rural character of the area that rural residential property owners expect. Current regulations allow for the creation of two new rural residential lots, plus the remaining parcel. This

approach is aimed at **balancing the need to accommodate some rural residential growth while maintaining the future development potential and character of the area.**

Rural Estate Subdivisions

Current Official Plan policies do not permit rural estate subdivisions. This prohibition was put in place for many of the same reasons described above. In addition, there continue to exist a number of draft approved and registered rural estate subdivisions that remain vacant. Going forward, it may be appropriate to permit rural estate subdivisions on waterfront lots. Much like the rural residential lifestyle that many enjoy, waterfront properties are also appealing. Locally, Sault Ste. Marie is blessed with a significant waterfront, both in the urban and rural areas. The overall potential for rural waterfront subdivisions is relatively limited, in terms of the number and size of available lots, environmental constraints such as coastal wetlands, and existing non-residential development would impact the ability to locate new residential lots.

Minimum Distance Separation Requirements Between Livestock Facilities and Nearby Sensitive (Residential) Uses

Provincial policy requires the application of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae. OMAFRA's MDS applies to new residential development in the vicinity of an existing livestock operation, as well as the expansion of an existing livestock facility (barn or manure storage) in close proximity to sensitive uses such as rural residences. The issue is odour and the MDS Formulae are based upon the size of the livestock facility and the type of livestock.

Table 10.5: Sample Agricultural Minimum Distance Separation Calculations.

Source: Ontario Agricultural Planning Tools Suite, MDS Calculator.

Livestock facility		Minimum distance from "Type A Land Use" to existing facility (Less sensitive, rural land uses)		Minimum distance from "Type B Land Use" to existing facility (More sensitive, urban land uses, residential, parks)	
Number and type	Typical barn area	Distance to barn	Distance to manure storage	Distance to barn	Distance to manure storage
2 horses	46m ²	81m (265ft)	10m (341ft)	162m (531ft)	183m (599ft)
6 horses	139m ²	93m (307ft)	116m (381ft)	165m (542ft)	186m (611ft)
2 dairy cows	19m ²	92m (303ft)	274m (899ft)	185m (606ft)	348m (1141ft)
6 dairy cows	56m ²	110m (365ft)	289m (948ft)	193m (634ft)	355m (1163ft)

Note: For these sample calculations:

- MDS I formula was used, i.e. distance from an existing livestock facility.
- Manure storage type used was worst-case manure storage type for that type of livestock facility.

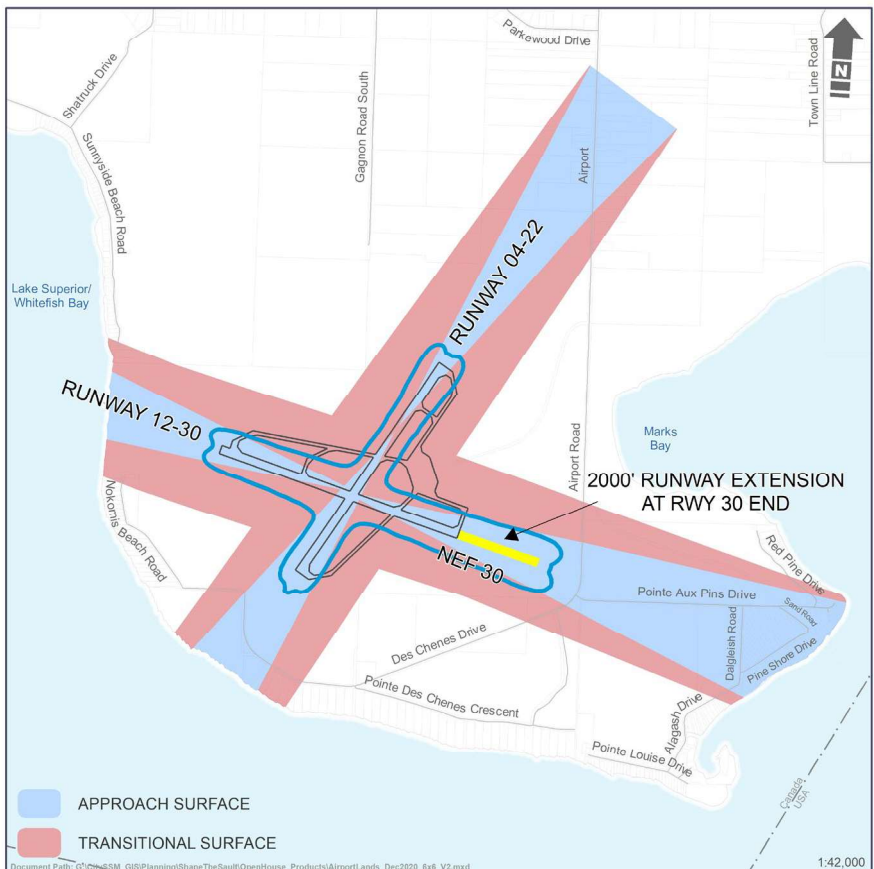
Sault Ste. Marie Airport (YAM)

The Sault Ste. Marie Airport is a significant land use and activity hub in the Sault's Rural Area. The Sault Ste. Marie Airport Development Corporation (SSMADC) has owned and operated the Airport since 1998. The core function of the Airport is to facilitate airplane movements and support the movement of people and freight.

The air service at YAM currently includes regional daily passenger flights to Toronto operated by Air Canada Express and Porter Airlines. Bearskin Airlines provides regular service to Sudbury and Thunder Bay. Sunwing Airlines operates weekly direct flights to southern destinations on a seasonal basis. FedEx and SkyLink Express provide cargo services every weekday. In 2019, there were a total of 57,376 aircraft movements at the Sault Ste. Marie Airport. Total passenger numbers have risen steadily, from 173,676 passengers in 2011, peaking at 216,172 passengers in 2018. 2019 saw a slight decline to 211,277 passengers passing through the Airport.

Airports are considered by the Province as “major facilities”, meaning municipalities are required to provide protection for an airport’s long-term operation by managing development in nearby areas, especially the development of sensitive uses such as residential. When reviewing development proposals near the Airport, the City must take into consideration their proximity to established **Noise Exposure Forecast 30 (NEF 30)** contours, as well as maximum height regulations set by Transport Canada for any development within the Airport runways’ **approach** and **transitional surfaces**.

Figure 10.4: Regulated Lands around Sault Ste. Marie Airport for Aviation Safety and Noise.
 Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.



The Airport has two 1,829-metre (6,000 feet) runways with Transport Canada approvals to extend Runway 22 (north) and Runway 30 (east) an additional 609.6 metres (2,000 feet). In consultation with the SSMADC, the extension of Runway 22 to the north is not feasible, and therefore should not be contemplated within the Official Plan. It is however appropriate to implement the Noise Exposure Forecast 30 (NEF 30) that includes the potential extension of Runway 30 (east), so that any future development does not impact the Airport's ability to extend that runway.

The current Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF) was completed by Avatar Consulting in 2008. The development of sensitive uses, such as residential uses, should not be permitted to locate within NEF 30. Given the relatively large Airport land holdings beyond the end of each runway, NEF is not a significant land use issue, with the exception of a portion of private property east of Runway 30.

Federal height restrictions are determined as follows:

- Approach Surface — Maximum height is less than 1 vertical unit for every 50 horizontal units from the end of the runway (1:50).
- Transitional Surface — Maximum height is less than 1 vertical unit for every 7 horizontal units from the end of the runway (1:7).

Table 10.6: Maximum Permitted Height at Airport Property Line within the Approach and Transitional Surfaces Adjacent to Each Runway.

Source: City of Sault Ste. Marie.

Runway	Max Height within Approach Surface at Airport Property Line (1:50)	Max Height within Transitional Surface at Airport Property Line (1:7)
22 (north)	18m (59')	129m (422')
30 (east)*	6.7m (22')	48m (157')
04 (south)	12.7m (41.5')	91m (298')
12 (west)	17m (56')	122m (400')

*Note: Includes a 609.6m (2,000') runway extension.

The relatively large land holdings beyond the end of the runways, and the rural nature of surrounding land uses, is such that the maximum height regulations will not significantly impact future development. Having said this, these regulations may impact future development upon the Airport. Furthermore, any sale of Airport lands within the approach or transitional surfaces will need to consider maximum height restrictions.

Strategic Importance of the Airport

The Sault Ste. Marie Airport plays an important economic role in the community and functions as a significant hub in the Rural Area. The Airport contains a wide variety of **airport-related accessory uses** which are either:

- Required to support the core functions of the airport, or
- Are located because the airport supports the core function of the business.

Examples include food and accommodation, refueling, air traffic control, warehousing and delivery, aircraft maintenance and repair, flight training, freight, warehousing and runway maintenance, to name a few. Many airports also contain a variety of **compatible uses** which may benefit from being located

at the airport, but aren't required to locate at an airport and do not impact the core function of the airport. Examples include golf courses, fairgrounds, light manufacturing and personal storage.

The land owned by the Sault Ste. Marie Airport Development Corporation encompasses **735 hectares (1,816 acres)** of land and approximately 300 people work at the Airport. In addition to those jobs required to support the core function of the Airport, tenants such as JD Aero Technical, the Ministry of Natural Resources Forestry Flight Management and Training Centre, and Sault College's Aviation School, are significant contributors to the overall employment and activities on Airport-owned lands.

Compatible uses include fairgrounds, golf courses and renewable energy generation (solar farms), to name a few. Runway Park, a motorized racetrack and fairground facility occupying the northernmost portion of the Airport is an example of a compatible use.

In addition to Noise Exposure Forecast and Federal height restrictions, there are a number of other development constraints that apply to the Airport. The Airport is serviced by on-site well and septic systems and given its location, extending municipal water and sewer services to the Airport is not feasible at this time. Therefore, future uses would need to be relatively 'dry' in nature, and not require large quantities of water as part of their process. There is also a sizable wetland — **Mary Ann Lake** — located on the eastern portion of the Airport lands near Dr. Roberta Bondar Parkway. The Provincially Significant **Shore Ridges coastal wetland** borders the Airport to the northwest and environmentally sensitive **Deer Wintering Yards** are located north and south of the Airport.

Given the strategic importance of the Airport, current and proposed planning regulations will support a variety of appropriate airport-related and compatible uses. Furthermore, development restrictions will be implemented to ensure that sensitive uses do not impact the core function of the Airport, including future expansions.

What We Heard

Key Themes Heard on: Rural Area and Agriculture

Agriculture

- In general, Saultites are strongly in favour of supporting local agriculture.
- The City should protect farmable lands for agriculture, and stop allowing urban sprawl and solar farms on these lands. One Saultite suggested the City should even consider conversion of rural residential lots to farm use.
- To help local farm owners, the City should give incentives for keeping farm land intact, and also grow and support local farmers' markets.
- The City should also look at promoting newer agricultural industries, such as cannabis, as well as promoting newer agricultural practices, such as small plot intensive farming (SPIN) and use of C-can shipping containers for agricultural businesses.
- Some Saultites noted that there are very few remaining large parcels in the Rural Area that could be used for farming, but at the same time, large, expansive farms are often unsustainable. However, there is good demand for living in the Rural Area and engaging in food growing or animal keeping on the same property.
 - To meet this demand, the City should consider loosening regulations regarding severances and allow more five-acre lots where residential and agricultural uses are both permitted.
- Saultites also expressed support for more urban agriculture, referring to community gardens, backyard agriculture and rooftop gardens.
 - In particular, the City should allow community gardens on any public land, especially land that is underused.
- There is interest from certain groups in creating places where producers of local food (and similarly for local crafts) can grow, make, process and add value to products, as well as sell those products, all in the same place. These places can also be integrated into so-called community hubs.
- The City should expand maple syrup production opportunities in the Precambrian Uplands area.

Rural Residential Uses

- Most residents strongly felt that the City should not encourage or allow more development of the Rural Area for residential purposes, and should instead protect rural lands for farm land. Some residents however wished to see the City allow more five-acre rural lots where residents can have residential, agricultural and private recreational uses all on the same lot.
- Residents in the Pointes area wished to see the City clarify any future plans for that part of the city.
- Residents who live in the Rural Area suggested the City should construct more recreational amenities in the Rural Area, such as at Pointe des Chenes.

Sault Ste. Marie Airport

The Sault Ste. Marie Airport Development Corporation completed a Business and Land Use Master Plan in 2014 that outlined the Airport's expected land development needs in the near future:

- In general, the Airport expects that the pace of land development at the Airport will continue at a relatively slow pace.

- There are plans to extend one of the existing runway's southeast end.
- The Airport has identified a number of development areas located on the Airport lands that can be developed for commercial uses.
- As well, there are a few adjacent properties owned by the Airport that might not be needed for either the Airport's use or airport-related commercial development.

What We Propose

Proposed Official Plan Policies on: Rural Area and Agriculture

The Rural Area comprises all of the area of the City of Sault Ste. Marie outside of the Urban Settlement Area. Rural land uses include agricultural uses, extractive uses such as mining, quarrying and aggregate removal, the Airport, golf courses, riding academies, kennels, cemeteries and rural residences. The Rural Area also has a number of large community parks and a network of formal and informal trails.

Rural Agriculture

The City shall support existing and potential future agricultural operations.  

- Lots shall be large enough to support the intended agricultural use, with the recognition that crop production can occur on smaller lots and livestock operations require larger lots.
- Proposals for new or expanded livestock facilities (barns and manure storage) shall adhere to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) Minimum Distance Separation Formulae, to ensure adequate separation from any nearby sensitive uses, such as residential uses.
- A variety of 'on-farm diversified uses' will be permitted upon agricultural properties subject to the following criteria:
 - The property must be part of the Farm Property Class Tax Rate Program
 - The use does not impair the primary agricultural operation.
 - The use does not negatively impact nearby sensitive uses.
 - The use can be supported with adequate on-site well and septic services and parking.
 - The use does not create the risk of a spill or contamination of the groundwater aquifer.

Where fuel storage and handling is required, source water protection policies apply. Examples of on-farm diversified uses include but are not limited to agricultural processing (excluding a slaughterhouse/abattoir), retail of agricultural and agricultural-related products, food services, banquet facilities, personal storage and bed & breakfasts.

A variety of 'Home Based Industries' may be permitted upon an agricultural property, by way of a rezoning, subject to the above noted criteria. Examples of 'Home Based Industries' include but are not limited to small-scale trades shops and contractors' yards.

- Small-scale, non-permanent, seasonal food outlets are permitted on any land designated Commercial, Mixed Employment or Rural Area, subject to the following criteria:
 - They are located upon private property with frontage on an arterial road, excluding seasonal food outlets that are an on-farm diversified use.
 - The seasonal local food outlet vendor has written approval from the registered property owner to operate from the location.
 - The construction of any buildings or structures is discouraged. Any installations, such as tables, tents and signage shall be non-permanent and temporary in nature.
 - That adequate on-site parking can be accommodated.
 - That the seasonal food outlet be located in a manner that all required setbacks can be achieved.

Accessory Uses to Maple Syrup Production ↗

Maple sap tapping and maple syrup production are agricultural uses. Accessory uses such as bottling, retail sales, food services and public tours are also permitted, subject to the following criteria:

- The use does not impair the primary maple syrup operation.
- The use does not negatively impact nearby sensitive uses.
- The use can be supported with adequate on-site well and septic services and parking.
- The use does not create the risk of a spill or contamination of the groundwater aquifer. Where fuel storage and handling is required, source water protection policies apply.

Maple Syrup Production in the Precambrian Uplands ↗

Maple syrup production is permitted to locate within the Precambrian Uplands area. Given that many properties do not have frontage upon a publicly owned and maintained roadway, maple syrup production facilities in the Precambrian Uplands are subject to the following criteria:

- Where a property does not have frontage upon a publicly owned and maintained roadway, legal access agreements, for a period exceeding 21 years, must be established across all properties from which access is obtained. This may require Consent approvals.
- Accessory uses intended to be open to the public, such as food services, retail sales and public tours are not permitted.

Urban Agriculture ♥

- The keeping of up to 3 hens in the rear yard of a single detached dwelling is permitted. The hens must be kept in an enclosure subject to minimum setback requirements implemented through the Zoning By-law.
- Private gardens and orchards are encouraged within all land use designations.

Community Gardens ♥

Community gardens are permitted in all land use designations, excluding Industrial designated lands.

- Depending upon the historical usage of the site, where there is the potential for soil contamination, a Record of Site Condition may be required to ensure that gardens are not being planted on contaminated soils. Alternatively, raised garden beds with an impermeable barrier between the garden bed and any contaminated soils may be permitted, subject to review of a qualified professional.
- The City supports locating community gardens on City-owned property, including City-owned parks, subject to the “New Uses in Parks” policies in the [Parks, Recreation, Arts, Culture and Heritage Chapter](#).

Food Banks 🍴

- Food banks are encouraged to locate within ‘public service facilities’ and ‘community hubs’, especially those that provide services to vulnerable people. Please refer to the [Land Use Compatibility Chapter](#) for policies on public service facilities and community hubs.
- Food banks may include a variety of food-related accessory uses, such as food services, community kitchens, educational courses, greenhouses and community gardens.

Rural Residential Development

- Rural lot creation through Consent to Sever shall be limited to the creation of two new lots, plus the remnant or retained parcel. This limit shall be applied from July 14, 2014.

- A Consent to Sever application to the Committee of Adjustment may be considered provided:
 - Lands are divided in an efficient manner, and that landlocked parcels are not created.
 - Future urban residential development potential is not significantly impacted.
 - The proposed lot shall have frontage upon, and direct access to a public road that is maintained by the City on a year-round basis.
 - The proposed lot and planned development will not have a negative impact upon the drainage patterns of the area.
 - The severed and retained parcels shall fit into the general character of the surrounding area, in terms of frontage, size and parcel fabric.
 - The severed and retained parcels must be large enough for the adequate provision of on-site services, including their future replacement in the event of a failure. Algoma Public Health approval of on-site sewage servicing is required, including proof of a contract with a private septic hauler. The implementing Zoning By-law will outline minimum lot areas.
 - Where municipal water and sewer services exist, smaller lots may be considered, so long as the severed and retained lot frontages and sizes are within the general character of the area.
 - Sensitive areas such as wetlands, ravines, flood areas, known archaeological sites, and threatened or endangered species or their habitats are not negatively impacted.
 - New rural residential lots shall adhere to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' Minimum Distance Separation Formulae, as it relates to setbacks from nearby livestock facilities.
 - Rural residential severances in the Precambrian Uplands and Aggregate Extraction Areas are prohibited.
- Rural Estate Subdivisions are generally discouraged; however, they may be permitted subject to the following criteria:
 - That the property proposed to be developed abuts and has direct access to the upper or lower St. Marys River.
 - The proposed lots have water frontage or direct access to the water through dedicated lands that form part of the subdivision. Proponents may also be required to include public access to the water as part of any approvals.
 - The development can adhere to all other aspects of the Official Plan, including but not limited to, policies related to natural heritage features, development constraints and minimum distances from livestock operations.

Sault Ste. Marie Airport ↗

1. The development of the Airport lands should not interfere with the prime function of the lands related to air traffic control.
2. Sufficient buffer areas and setbacks shall be provided to protect wetlands, Provincially Significant Wetlands and other sensitive areas within the Airport property.
3. Servicing of the site will be self-contained within the existing property and subject to the carrying capacity of the site.
4. All airport-related uses and compatible commercial and light industrial uses are permitted. Ancillary and secondary uses such as car rental, accommodation, restaurants and convenience retail are also permitted.
5. Recreational uses such as a golf course, fairgrounds, motocross speedway, drag strip and snowmobile race course may be permitted subject to required zoning approvals.

6. Development in the vicinity of the Airport shall be undertaken in a manner that protects the long-term operation and economic role of the Airport. More specifically:
 - a. Sensitive land uses, including the creation of new residential lots, are prohibited above 30 Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF).
 - b. Where redevelopment, infilling or the expansion of a sensitive land use is proposed in areas above 30 NEF, such proposals must be accompanied by a report, prepared by a qualified professional, which demonstrates that appropriate Ministry of Environment noise guidelines can be achieved.
 - c. Development shall adhere to the following height restrictions:
 - i. For lands within the Approach Surface, the maximum building height shall be calculated at no more than 1 vertical unit for every 50 horizontal units, starting at the edge of the runway.
 - ii. For lands within the Transitional Surface, the maximum building height shall be calculated at no more than 1 vertical unit for every 7 horizontal units, starting at the edge of the runway.