

IMAGINE  
**COLCHESTER**

# THE PATH TO COLCHESTER

**Backgrounder**

May 2015



The Capital Region is growing and Strathcona County's high quality of life will continue to attract new residents and businesses. To plan wisely for growth, the County has undertaken a series of studies, most recently completing the Bremner Growth Management Strategy in 2014. The next step is to undertake a growth management strategy for the County's other potential urban growth area, Colchester, located south of Highway 628 and west of Highway 21. The **Colchester Growth Management Strategy** will consider how an urban community might be developed in the area to assist Council in deciding where to grow next as Sherwood Park becomes fully developed.

**The purpose of this background paper is to provide a historical overview of the County's development, and in particular the Colchester area, and to summarize the planning process that has been undertaken to date to help determine the location of Strathcona County's next urban community.**

## **The historic community of Colchester**

The community of Colchester was founded in the 1890s as settlers were drawn to the area by the ready availability of affordable land. The area was officially declared open for settlement in 1894 with land valued at three dollars an acre. Early pioneers were of many nationalities including Irish, English, American, Russian, Polish and German. At the time the land was heavily treed and had to be cleared, first by hand with axes and later with oxen and plows. It was then seeded with crops such as oats and wheat, which were hauled to Edmonton and ground into oatmeal and flour.

An authentic log home remains from this period and is included in the Strathcona County Heritage Inventory. The home was constructed in 1895 by prominent early settler Charles Hill. Mr. Hill and his wife hosted the first Anglican services in their home and participated in a community-wide effort to found the area's first Anglican Church, St. Stephen's, in 1898. While St. Stephen's Church was later moved to South Edmonton and renamed, the Colchester Cemetery still exists in its original location on the site.

The first subdivision to be created in Colchester was Trevithick Park in 1955. Alfred and Hazel Trevithick subdivided 80 acres of their farm into three acre lots, with one eight-acre parcel set aside for parkland. The Colchester Community League was formed in 1968 and took over the development of the parkland, building the Colchester Community Hall and baseball diamonds that remain there today.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Source: Christie, Agnes. *Down Memory Lane in Colchester*.



The Colchester School District No. 452 was organized in 1894, and the first schoolhouse, a one room log structure, was built in 1898. Source: *Down Memory Lane in Colchester*



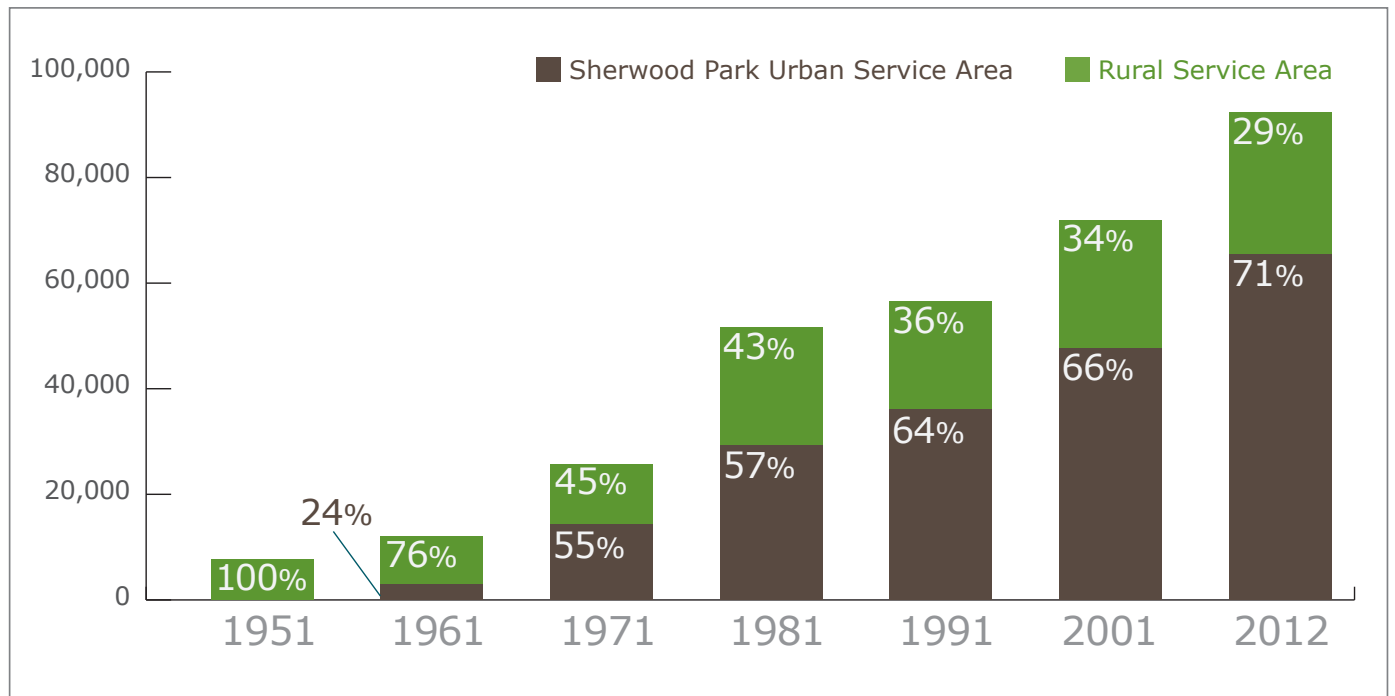
Charles Hill Residence  
Source: Strathcona County Heritage Inventory



Colchester Cemetery  
Source: Strathcona County



Colchester Community Hall  
Source: Colchester Community League



County population 1951-2012

Sources: Statistics Canada 1956-1981, 1991-2006 and Strathcona County 1987, 2012

## How the County has grown

Strathcona County was a completely rural community until Council approved the first urban development as a home for oil industry workers in 1953. At that time, the County only had a population of 7,500 people. For the past 60 years Sherwood Park has grown rapidly, reaching a population of 65,000 by 2012, or about 71% of the County's total population of 92,000.

The Capital Region Board projects that Strathcona County will need to accommodate between 45,000 and 67,000 new residents by 2044, and many of these people will want to settle in urban areas. There is room for approximately 21,000 more people within planned developments in Sherwood Park, including the new Cambrian Crossing area. Once these developments are filled, Sherwood Park will be built out. It is time to start planning the County's next urban community.

## The planning process to date

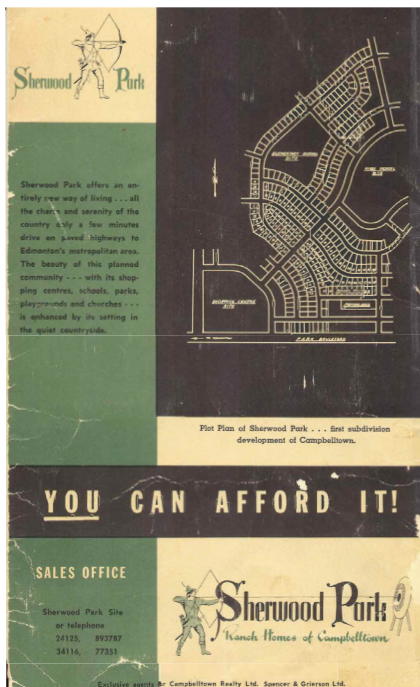
Anticipating future urban growth pressures, in 2001 the County completed a Future Areas Feasibility Study, which evaluated four potential future urban areas in the west half of the County, between Leduc County and Fort Saskatchewan. The study identified the Colchester and Bremner areas as preferred future urban areas. This work was followed by a number of other studies including an Evaluation of Urban Growth Options report in 2003 that evaluated three geographic areas –

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Sherwood Park in 1957  
Source: The Sherwood Park Mall



Sherwood Park Marketing  
Brochure  
Source: The Sherwood Park Mall

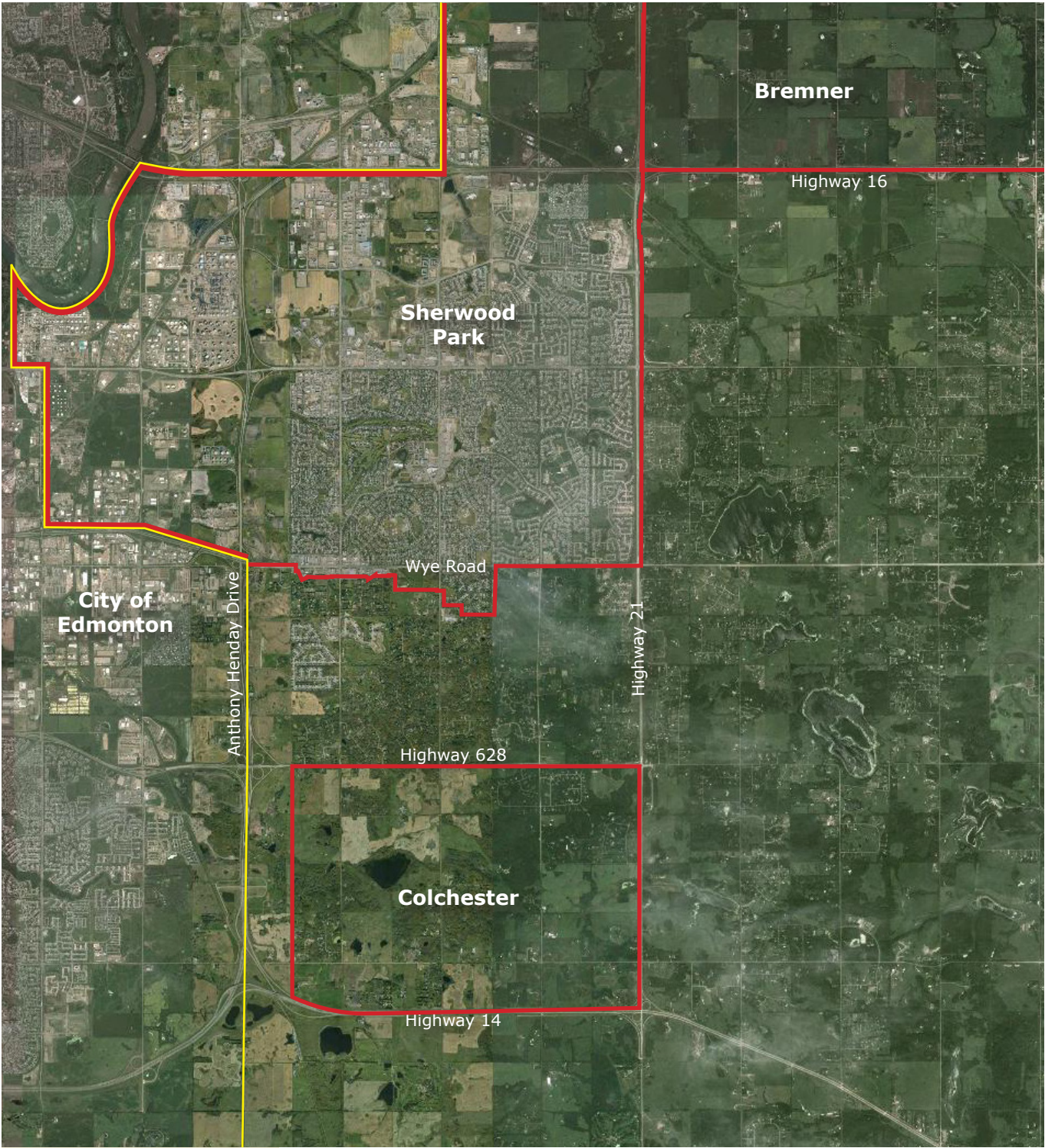
Colchester, Bremner and Ardrossan. The report eliminated Ardrossan as an option and concluded that Colchester was the preferred option due in part to its lower quality of agricultural land and access to infrastructure.

In 2007 Council approved a new Municipal Development Plan (MDP) for the County that identified Bremner as an Urban Reserve and Colchester as a Rural/Urban Transition Policy Area. In making its decision, Council considered the quality of the agricultural land that would be lost as well as numerous other factors including the fragmented ownership of land and extent of acreage development in Colchester. Other considerations included development constraints such as pipelines and highway corridors, environmental factors such as ecologically significant features and groundwater resources, and the cost of infrastructure such as water and sewer lines.

The Capital Region Growth Plan, approved by the Province in 2010, acknowledges the County's MDP and includes Bremner and Colchester within two of its Priority Growth Areas. In 2012 Council directed Administration to initiate a growth management strategy for Bremner and this was completed and received for information by Council in September 2014. Council has now directed Administration to initiate a growth management strategy for Colchester so that it will have the information it requires to make an informed decision about where the County's next urban community should be developed.



Context



Colchester within context

## About Imagine Colchester

Imagine Colchester will follow a similar planning process to that undertaken for Bremner and will provide multiple opportunities for input from landowners and the broader community. It will build on the previous planning studies and the sustainability principles established by the County's MDP.

The Imagine Colchester work plan has been organized into two parts. Tasks in Part 1 include:

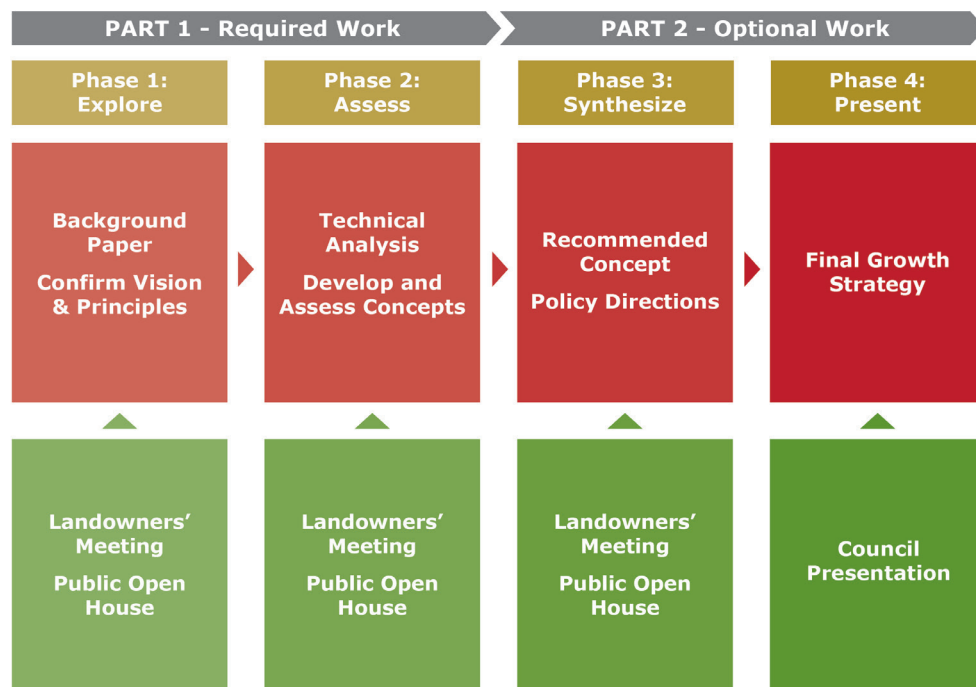
- Consider the vision and principles established for Bremner, and confirm and refine them to reflect the community's aspirations for Colchester
- Identify important environmental features to be protected and enhanced
- Identify options for the major road network and other infrastructure
- Develop three community design concepts for Colchester
- Evaluate the three concepts in terms of their fiscal impact and consistency with the vision and principles

Council will make a decision about whether to proceed with Part 2 of the work plan based on the findings of Part 1. If Part 1 demonstrates that constraints will limit the potential for a new community in Colchester, Council may decide that this growth area does not warrant further consideration at this time. If Council decides to proceed with Part 2, it will involve these main tasks:

- Develop a recommended community design concept for Colchester
- Develop policy directions for creating an attractive, sustainable and complete community
- Prepare the Colchester Growth Management Strategy document



A public consultation event for Imagine Bremner







**For more information about  
Imagine Colchester, including news about  
consultation events:**

**Visit** [strathcona.ca/imaginecolchester](http://strathcona.ca/imaginecolchester)

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