

What is LEAR?

LEAR stands for Land Evaluation and Area Review. LEAR is a process created by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to evaluate (or “score”) lands for agriculture based on the land's characteristics and other factors affecting agricultural potential. LEAR studies are used to identify prime agricultural areas, which is a requirement by the Province through the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

Scores from the LE and AR components are weighted and combined to provide an overall LEAR score for each property. The highest score represents the areas with the greatest agricultural potential.

LEAR scores may also be supplemented with additional analysis and field verification prior to designating prime agricultural areas such as local analysis, input and further evaluation.

The Municipality consulted OMAFRA on this required update and worked with OMAFRA to determine the LEAR approach which was specific to Mississippi Mills. Through this process, it was determined that any score 66 and above, would result in the lands being considered for classification as Agricultural.

Why is Mississippi Mills doing a LEAR study?

LEAR is one type of study used to inform the Municipality's Official Plan.

One of the important pieces to guide how the Municipality will grow over time, is determining which areas/lands should be protected because of their agricultural potential. It is also 'Provincial interest' to ensure that agricultural lands are protected in the long-term and municipalities must adhere to the province's requirements.

Every Municipality must update their Official Plan policies from time to time. In the last update to the Official Plan, OMAFRA provided direction that the Municipality needed to update their Agricultural and Rural classifications of land. This is why Mississippi Mills is doing the LEAR study.

There are two parts to a LEAR evaluation:

1. Land Evaluation (LE), which assesses inherent soil and climatic conditions for agriculture. OMAFRA's mapping is used to identify and compare the agricultural capability for common field crops.
2. Area Review (AR), which considers other factors important to agricultural potential such as fragmentation of the land base and how land is used.

Mississippi Mills Community Official Plan:

The Community Official Plan is the Municipality's land use and growth management plan. This plan includes land use policies for all types of uses and manages how the Municipality is expected to grow in the long-term.

Visit Mississippi Mills webpage for more information on LEAR:

[Frequently Asked Questions - LEAR](#)

What is the LEAR process in Mississippi Mills?

Mississippi Mills began the LEAR process in 2020. There were a number of public notifications provided to the public to advise them of this study. The Agricultural Advisory Committee and LEAR Working Group also met many times to review the LEAR scores and public input and to provide local agricultural knowledge and expertise.

- On May 4, 2020, a kick-off public meeting was held.
- Over 500 property owners that were affected by the LEAR study were notified in July 2021.
- In March 2021, a draft of the Official Plan Amendment to implement LEAR was presented to Mississippi Mills' Committee of the Whole
- On April 5, 2022, the final Public Meeting will be held to hear public feedback on the LEAR study and proposed amendments to Mississippi Mills Official Plan.

Next Steps:

Please refer to our Next Steps Highlight sheet to find out about the next steps in the LEAR process.

What does LEAR mean in the Mississippi Mills context?

Mississippi Mills has a strong, local agricultural economy. It is important for Mississippi Mills to ensure that this economy is protected for long term success, which includes protecting agricultural lands from redevelopment.

Mississippi Mills has an important Agricultural Sector

The Municipality is striving to provide a balanced approach to accommodate growth and change in the Municipality while ensuring the protection of the important agricultural industry.

Protecting agricultural lands from redevelopment can mean many things – from the severance of individual residential lots to larger scale redevelopment. The LEAR process will result in Official Plan policy changes, which in some cases, will restrict the ability to redevelop agricultural lands.

Most often, the Municipality hears from landowners that are concerned about impact of LEAR affecting the ability to sever a property to create residential building lots.

For more information on how LEAR may affect the ability to sever residential lots, please visit Mississippi Mills webpage for more information: [Frequently Asked Questions - LEAR](#)

Agricultural Advisory Committee and LEAR Working Group:

- Three (3) meetings of the Agricultural Advisory Committee were held.
- The LEAR Working Group met nine (9) times over the course of 2021 and 2022 to review the preliminary LEAR scores, review the public input and provide local expertise and knowledge.

Agricultural and Rural designations in the Official Plan

In Mississippi Mills Official Plan, the Agricultural designation reflects the Province's classification of "prime agriculture" lands.

The Rural designation in Mississippi Mills Official Plan also includes agricultural lands; however, does not reflect the Province's classification of "prime agricultural" lands.

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[Frequently Asked Questions - LEAR](#)