



Community Sustainability Plan

TAKE ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE HURON



***"Invest a decade to prosper a century."
Dr. Avi Friedman***

Under the Direction Of: The Sustainable
Huron Steering Committee
Huron County

December 2011

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The preparation of this sustainable community plan was carried out with assistance from the Green Municipal Fund, a Fund financed by the Government of Canada and administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Notwithstanding this support, the views expressed are the personal views of the authors, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Government of Canada accept no responsibility for them.

This plan was prepared by Lura Consulting, under the direction of the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people and organizations that contributed time and/or ideas to create this plan:

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Community

Almost 2000 people who helped in the development of Take Action for a Sustainable Huron.

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Foundation for a Sustainable Future

Take Action for Sustainable Huron

Throughout 2007 and 2008, municipal leaders engaged the Huron County community to create a common vision for a sustainable future. More than 1700 residents, community groups and organizations took part in these conversations. This collective voice is captured in *Take Action for Sustainable Huron (2009)* – a living document of community goals and actions to reach them; one which will evolve as the community’s goals and needs change over time.

The *Take Action* report, and the community effort that went into its creation, is the foundation and momentum for the Huron County Sustainability Plan. The vision, goals, and actions for a sustainable Huron in *Take Action* were the starting point – the Huron County Sustainability Plan provides the pathway to reach our community vision for the future.



Foreword

Welcome to the future of Huron County.

You are about to *Take Action for a Sustainable Huron*. Within this document lies a broad, but connected range of visions, ideas and aspirations for what our communities will be like in 2030 – the types of places we wish to live in, work in, recreate and serve in.

Each of these strategies works together to achieve a number of fundamental goals: the desire to maintain a certain level of material comfort; the ability to keep the best of what we have now while generating new possibilities; and finally, a desire to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future.

Take Action for a Sustainable Huron has been put together by hundreds of Huron County residents, organizations, networks and community leaders. In that sense, this future vision belongs to no one individually, but to everyone collectively. It is a *community* document, made *by* the community and *for* the community. And like any good long-term strategy, it is a reflection of what the people of Huron County aspire to; what we value most and what we wish to pass on to our children.

But most importantly, *Take Action for a Sustainable Huron* reflects a spirit of self-reliance and an assertion that communities are not formed by what happens *to us* – but by what *we make happen*. Huron County's future sustainability hinges on the combined efforts of local governments, community organizations and people like you.

I encourage you to read on and take the first step towards making something happen.

Paul Nichol

Huron Business Development Corporation
Member, Sustainable Huron Steering Committee

Whether we measure our history here in years or in generations

, we all care about our community and its future. It doesn't matter whether we are in school, working, or retired, or whether we are part of a town, village, hamlet, rural, or lakefront community. We all want to improve our community and our quality of life in it. There are aspects we want to preserve, and aspects we want to change.

This Plan consolidates concerns and ideas gathered from almost 2000 people. It addresses a wide range of strategies and actions spanning the promotion of agricultural, business, tourism, cultural, and residential growth and development, the protection and wise use of our natural resources for

both economic and recreational purposes, and the provision of a healthy-living environment for year-round and seasonal residents and visitors.

This is not the endpoint; it is only the beginning. Prioritizing, developing, and pursuing the actions listed in the Plan will require the enthusiastic participation of volunteers from all sectors of the Huron community. We invite you to identify the aspects of the Plan that mean the most to you, and become involved in shaping the social, economic, and environmental well-being of Huron County.

Roger Watt

Huron Sands, Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh Township
Member, Sustainable Huron Steering Committee

“A set, definite objective must be established if we are to accomplish anything in a big way.”

– John McDonald (1787 – 1860), Legislative Council of Upper Canada

All great endeavours are formed from the birth of an idea and this document is the birth of a more sustainable Huron County. It is the collective voice of Huron County’s men and women; thousands demanding a say in their future. *Take Action for a Sustainable Huron* is our ‘definite objective’ for the future of Huron County and includes the first steps toward a more sustainable future.

Over the course of almost two years, members and representatives of Huron’s population, whether it be demographic, business, recreational interest or other, met to discuss and collaborate on the future of their home. What about this community is important now? What is it about Huron County that interests the youth of the area that they may return and carry on in prosperity? What does Huron County hold that our grandchildren may inherit? This document attempts to answer and expound on questions like these.

Within this document the thoughts and visions of a community ready for change are demonstrated through strategic outreach programs and constructive ideas geared toward strengthening and enhancing the economic, cultural, agricultural and societal pillars of our community.

Here is our first step. These pages can help to build and define a new future – one in which a community learns to look forward and to contribute to an inheritance. Let the ideas inspire and the actions motivate you. Our future is up to us, so let us finally take the reins.

Lisa Justine Hood

General Manager, The Livery Theatre
Community Outreach Co-ordinator, Blyth Festival
Member, Sustainable Huron Steering Committee

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“Sustainability is about ensuring the long-term well-being of the planet, people, and economy. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Take Action for Sustainable Huron

What is Sustainability?

Sustainability has become a household word, but what exactly does it mean? One commonly used definition is from the 1987 *Our Common Future* report (Brundtland Report) which defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition points out several key ideas:

- Sustainability is recognizing how intricately linked are our economy, our society, and our environment;
- Sustainability is focusing on what we can do locally while recognizing global connections; and
- Sustainability is working together to make wise decisions about our future.



Ultimately, sustainability is about ensuring the long-term well-being of the planet, people and economy.

It is important to realize that sustainability is not an end-goal to be checked off a list as “done”. Instead, sustainability is a *way of thinking and doing* that needs to become a part of everyone’s day-to-day life:

- **For individuals**– sustainability means thinking differently about our habits and their consequences. It is about becoming more aware and living better – not living without.
- **For communities**– sustainability means being connected, self-sufficient and resourceful in order to cope with change.
- **For the County**– sustainability calls for community engagement, informed decision making, and the integration of sustainability principles into everyday business.

Why does Huron County need a Sustainability Plan?

We face many pressures in the 21st century—climate change, shifting global markets, rising oil prices, demographic change, biodiversity loss, and food security to name a few. These global pressures have local consequences, which can be made even more challenging by the rural nature of our Huron County community. This means we are facing things like severe weather events, out-migration of youth in search of better job opportunities, and lack of access to services because of transportation distances.

If we want to improve our quality of life in Huron County, we need to make sure our communities can handle, bounce back from and thrive in the face of any shocks or events – what is often referred to as *building the resiliency* of our communities. For this to happen we need supportive communities, a strong economy, and a healthy environment. Sustainability planning is how we can work towards this goal.

A Sustainability Plan starts from a common vision formed by the community and builds on a community's existing strengths. It is about connections; looking at the challenges in our economy, society and environment *together* as opposed to treating them as independent problems. It co-ordinates existing municipal plans under an over-arching umbrella – not replacing them, but making sure everything works towards the common vision. And it involves everyone in Huron County doing their part together to reach our vision. The final product is a plan *for* Huron County's future made *by* the Huron County community. The benefits of sustainability planning include:

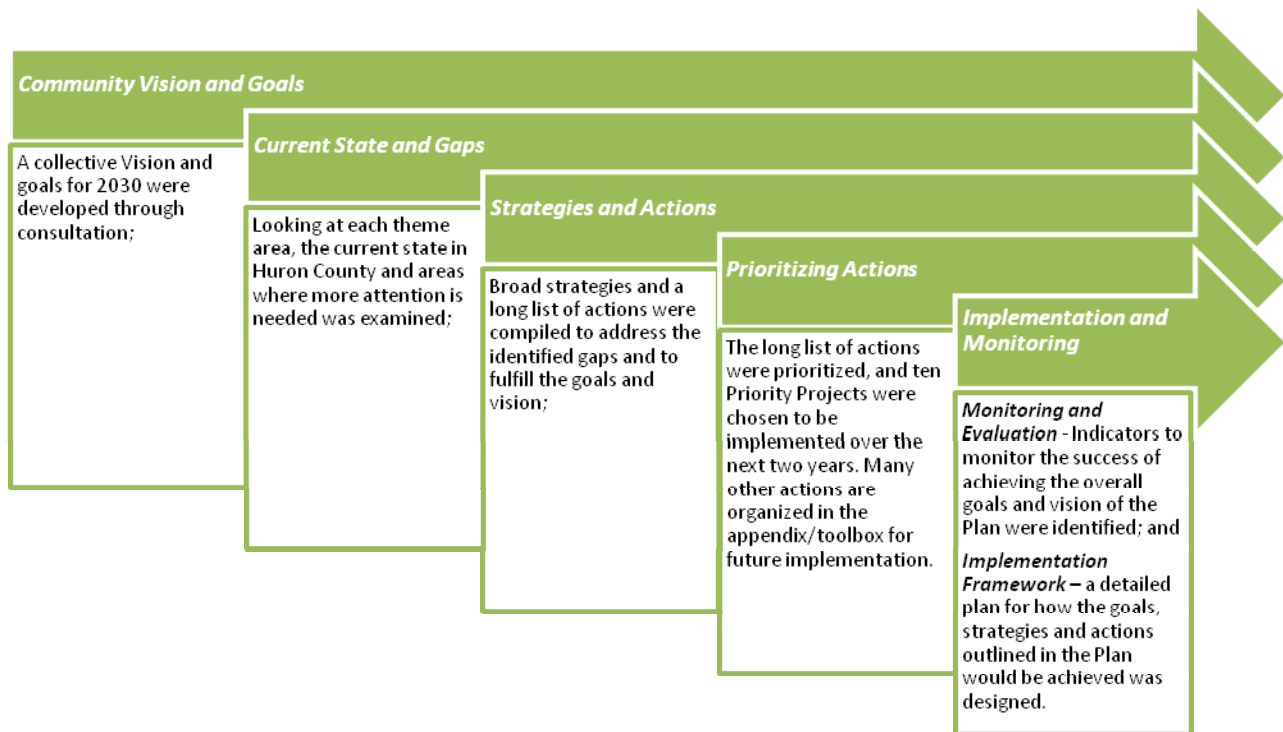
- Having a clear long-term vision;
- Strengthening economic vitality and social security;
- Improving our self-sufficiency;
- Protecting and restoring our natural assets;
- Minimizing our ecological footprint;
- Attracting great talent and building healthy communities;
- Empowering people through participation and leadership;
- Promoting environmentally sound technology and business;
- Promoting good governance; and
- Attracting funding.

Building our Plan

The Huron County Sustainability Plan was developed through a year-long community-based collaborative process starting in 2010. The process was guided by a Steering Committee made up of representatives with expertise in each of the priority theme areas identified in the *Take Action* report.

Key Stages

The development of Huron County’s Sustainability Plan started with the 10 Theme Areas from *Take Action*. Five key steps were involved:



Early Win Projects

Three “Early Win” projects were launched at start of the Sustainability Plan development process. These projects were selected for their ability to build community momentum about planning for our sustainable future, and to showcase sustainability in action. The projects were chosen from the *Take Action* report based on potential benefits to the community, ability to complete in a short time frame, degree of overlap with multiple sustainability goals, and partnership opportunities. The achievements to date from each Early Win projects are featured throughout this Sustainability Plan.

- The School Yard Planting Project: Page 13
- The Food Enterprise Opportunities Project: Page 24
- The Manufacturing Efficiencies Project: Page 32

Selection of the Priority Projects

Out of the full list of future actions to carry out under the Sustainability Plan, a number of priority projects were chosen for implementation over the next two years. These projects are in areas that need priority attention, are the first step to carrying out other actions in the plan, or will help raise awareness about adopting sustainable principles into our work, home and play.

The Priority Projects were selected by the Steering Committee through a rigorous review of the full list of actions, using the following criteria:

- Overlap across theme areas;
- Builds on or complements existing initiatives;
- Availability of partners to carry out the action;
- Will achieve major progress in two years;
- Availability of funding;
- Community interest and support;
- Opportunities for raising awareness about sustainability; and
- Creates momentum for implementing the sustainability plan.

Theme Areas from *Take Action*

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1) Economy | 6) Natural Environment |
| 2) Transportation | 7) Population |
| 3) Agriculture | 8) Downtowns |
| 4) Energy | 9) Community Needs |
| 5) Liveable Communities | 10) Healthy Active Communities |

A Conversation about Sustainability

Participation in the development of the Sustainability Plan was extensive, with the perspectives of hundreds of Huron County community members and organizations contributing to the final plan. Individuals and groups engaged in the process included: County Council, local municipalities, businesses, agricultural groups, tourism industry, heritage associations, environmental groups, community groups, the general public including youth and seniors, residents at large and tourists.

These groups and individuals participated in developing the plan and were informed of progress at key stages through:

- “Places and Spaces” conversations - where we set up a booth at fall fairs and other community events and spoke with community members;
- Social media – such as Twitter, Facebook, and the Sustainable Huron Blog;
- Sustainable Huron Newsletter;
- Questionnaires distributed from our Sustainable Huron booth;
- An on-line survey;
- Steering Committee meetings;
- Working sessions;
- Presentations to municipalities and specific stakeholder groups; and
- Public forums.

To raise awareness and excitement among young people in Huron County about sustainability and Huron’s Sustainability Plan, an Art Contest was held in 2010. Through schools and public announcements, youth were invited to submit a piece of art representing their vision of a Sustainable Huron. The contest winner was Jasmine DeBoer from Central Huron High School who submitted her photograph (below).



Jasmine DeBoer, Youth Contest Entry

Our Vision

A Community for Generations

This vision was adopted from the County of Huron Corporate Strategy because it fits so well with the objectives of Sustainable Huron. It recognizes the hard work and successes of past generations who laid the foundations for the present, it embodies the work we must tackle now to leave a strong legacy for those that follow, and it creates hope for future residents and descendants. The community includes all present generations – young, old, in-between, and newcomers. And finally, this vision underscores the creativity of Huron residents to rise to the challenge of securing its future by addressing needs, working together, and building resiliency.

Our Mission

Huron County is a vibrant and forward thinking community, taking action for a sustainable and prosperous future.

This mission is our “marching orders.” It recognizes the diversity of skills and talents within Huron’s people, and emphasizes the community’s desire to look ahead and take action to shape tomorrow, rather than allow it to shape us. A sustainable future is a more prosperous one.



Sustainability Principles

Ensuring that Huron’s sustainability plan is implemented the following organizational design principles were determined:

- **Recognizes:** the interdependence and importance of environmental, economic and social health in creating a vibrant and prosperous future for all in Huron County
- **Promotes:** our commitment to actions locally and thinking globally
- **Values:** our natural environment, strong communities, and economic forces that make Huron a truly unique and wonderful place to live, work, and play
- **Engages:** all people (residents and visitors), businesses, community groups, service clubs, industry associations, social organizations, schools, government and industries in the conversation around sustainability
- **Emphasizes:** community awareness, education, and involvement
- **Integrates:** our many great initiatives to ensure that we are working together and sharing resources where appropriate
- **Innovates:** with made-in-Huron County solutions that respond to the unique challenges that we face
- **Provides:** future generation with access to the same or better resources and quality of life than is available today
- **Achieves:** long term well-being for the social, economic, and environment in Huron County



Jasmine DeBoer, Youth Contest Entry

Priority Projects

Out of the full list of future actions to carry out under the Sustainability Plan, a number of priority projects were chosen for implementation over the next two years. These projects are in areas that need priority attention, are the first step to carrying out other actions in the plan, or will help raise awareness about adopting sustainable principles into our work, home and play. The Sustainable Huron Steering Committee deliberated extensively to select and develop the priority projects based on the criteria set out on page 4.

Please note that each priority project is linked to a goal and a strategy that can be found starting on page 38.



Daniel Holm

Natural Environment

Goal: Huron County will have a healthy, resilient ecosystem with connected natural areas, clean water, and diverse flora and fauna.

Strategy: Maintain, Protect and Improve the Quality and Quantity of Huron County's Surface and Groundwater Resources (NE3)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Develop a foundation for Rural Storm Water Management Plans for use across all watersheds in Huron County

Description

The quality of our water is critically important. This project will seek to develop solutions that will assist with the unique challenges of rural storm water, including addressing increased rainfall intensities, and changes in freeze/thaw cycles. While we should focus on rural lands, it is important to also realize the role of settlements and lakeshore development in water management. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes: natural environment, agriculture and liveable communities. The Water Protection Steering Committee will coordinate actions, share information and pool resources. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes:

- Natural Environment (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Liveable Communities (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Agriculture (Economic Security)
- Economy (Economic Pillar)

Activities will include

- Development of storm water management modelling through the multi-agency Southeast Shore initiative
- Identify priority areas through a modelling process
- Ongoing creation of demonstration watersheds showcasing best management practices
- Seeking funding for implementation
- *Others to be completed*

Lead and Coordination

- Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee

Partners

- Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
- Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
- Lake Huron Southeast Shore Initiative (interagency steering committee and working group)
- Stewardship Council
- Lakeshore Groups
- General Farm Organizations
- Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

Measures of Success

- Funding secured
- Completion of the model
- Number of demonstration watershed plans completed
- Number of projects completed

Timeline

- Complete the model and trial implementation in priority watersheds by the end of 2013.



Craig Allen

“Because climate change threatens to irrevocably change the environment around us, Ontario municipalities will be faced with numerous challenging decisions as they adapt to these new circumstances. More frequent extreme weather events will damage built capital including municipal infrastructure. Exposure to more pronounced threats, such as heat waves, will tax our public health units and can erode human capital.” *Climate Change Position Paper, AMO, 2010*

Climate Change in Huron County

The media is full of often confusing commentary and debate about rising greenhouse gases and the implication this has for our planet’s climate. Climate change is typically talked about on a global scale, and in reference to faraway places – sea level rising in small island states, deserts receiving too much rain, and rainy regions receiving too little. Scientists present models about what our planet will look like in 20, 30 or 50 years dependent on the measures taken to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

What does any of this mean for us in Huron County, today? The issue of climate change is important for three main reasons, reasons often missing from conversations on the news: 1) climate change is not just a concern for the future – the impacts of climate change are being felt around the world right now; 2) while a global problem, the impacts of climate change are experienced locally by communities like ours; and 3) climate change impacts aren’t limited to one group or one sector of society – they cross environmental, economic, cultural and social boundaries.

In Huron County, we can relate to climate change impacts through the changes seen in the natural environment – more severe weather events, flooding, erosion, and other stresses on our natural resources. This is only the surface, however. These impacts have economic implications – costly cleanups and repairs from roads washing out, poor crop productivity and its negative impacts on the agricultural industry, money spent on rebuilding structural damage. These physical and economic impacts in turn have implications for our communities. Low-income individuals and families, for example, are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts because they do not have the financial resources and social networks to bounce back from major disturbances.

Huron County has an opportunity to develop local solutions to the global problem of climate change, and the Huron County Sustainability Plan represents one step towards this goal. The Plan includes actions towards climate change mitigation, such as improving energy efficiency (e.g. ENCO1, ENCO2, ENCO3), promoting the use of green energy (GE1), and reducing single-occupancy vehicles through active transportation (HAC2). The Plan also includes actions that strengthen our natural environments, our economy, and our society, making us more resilient and able to withstand negative climate change effects – for example by protecting our natural environment (e.g. NE1, NE2), by supporting all sectors of our community (e.g. POP4, CN2) and by fostering a strong economy (e.g. EC1, EC2).

Climate change is a global problem, and will require the cooperation of nations to resolve. But here in Huron County, we can work together to ensure that our environment, economy, and society is resilient to change, all while carrying out local actions that are part of the global solution.

Energy Conservation

Goal: Huron County will maximize energy conservation.

Strategy: Exhibit Municipal Leadership in Energy Awareness and Use (ENCO2)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Develop Municipal Energy Plans

Description

The County and nine municipalities will develop municipal energy plans focused on energy conservation and best practices. This action will serve to decrease energy consumption in County and municipal buildings and operations, contributing to a reduction of Huron County's carbon emissions and saving money through improved efficiencies in operations. It will also raise awareness regarding energy conservation among industries, businesses, and the general public. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes:

- Natural Environment (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Economy (Economic Pillar)

Activities will include

- Creating a working group with the County and 9 municipalities represented;
- Conducting baseline and comparison energy audits on municipal buildings and operations, linking with existing energy audit programs;
- Setting targets for energy reduction;
- Developing a pilot program for energy conservation plans;
- Implementing the energy conservation pilot through education programs and campaigns;
- Sharing lessons learned with local businesses and institutions as well as through public outreach.

Lead and Coordination

- Huron County
- Municipalities within Huron County

Measures of Success

- Creation of baseline data
- Attaining energy reduction targets

Timeline

The first generation municipal energy plans will be completed by the end of 2013.

The Schoolyard Planting Project strengthened the connections that students and teachers have with nature, fostering awareness of the importance of respecting and preserving the web of life.

Sustainability in Action

The Schoolyard Planting Project

This project created naturalized outdoor classrooms at three of Huron's elementary schools. This project will improve the quality of existing natural areas, providing shade and wind protection, fostering natural environment and ecological awareness, providing erosion control, and engaging youth to create meaningful change. Developed in partnership with the Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authorities, this pilot project by Huron County helps to showcase sustainability in action by engaging youth in the plan.



The Schoolyard Planting project was well received by the school community, with many enthusiastic applications from Huron County schools and proposals from professional landscape designers interested to participate in the initiative. Three Grade Six classes from Seaforth Public School, Brookside Public School and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic School were selected to collaborate with selected landscape designer Jane Eligh-Feryn.

The project began with in-class workshops, teaching students about naturalized and local landscapes, the tree planting process, and the benefits of taking action for ecological sustainability in their schoolyard. *"This interactive process will allow the students to become the designers of their own environment. They will understand that they are designing places that the school community will use, but that they will share with birds, pollinating insects and small mammals. This is a wonderful opportunity for young people to learn first-hand, what it means to create and protect habitat."* said Jane Eligh-Feryn, of Eligh-Feryn Landscape Planning and Design.

This project will be expanded across Huron County and act as an example for future initiatives.

Population

Goal: Huron County will sustain a moderate population growth with increased ethnic diversity by retaining current residents, welcoming new residents, and developing opportunities for youth, families and seniors.

Strategy: Market and Promote Huron County as a Great Place to Live and Vacation (POP2)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Make Huron Home

Description

This project involves the development of a marketing, messaging and branding campaign targeted to attract newcomers to Huron County (e.g. young professionals/family under 35 in creative professions) as well as to retain our population. This action will assist in diversifying both our community and our economy in Huron County. It will help our population grow, support the influx of new and fresh ideas, and will assist with youth retention by making Huron County a rich and diverse community to live in. By attracting newcomers to Huron County, our economy will also be diversified, enhancing economic security. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes:

- Population (Community/Social Pillar)
- Economy (Economic Pillar)

This project ties into the *Make Huron Home* and *Creative Huron* campaigns currently underway in Huron County. Activities will include:

- Creating messaging and promotional materials to attract newcomers – e.g. marketing Huron County as a fertile ground for creating your own sector/business
- Providing promotional material to trade shows, retailers and others working with “selling” Huron County
- Building capacity in our current population to ensure the creation of a welcoming and friendly community for newcomers
- Toolkits for realtors to help communicate the specific context of living in Huron (e.g., agricultural opportunities, rural services, environmental protection)

Activities will include:

- Develop an action team with key leads from the Local Immigration Partnership, Tourism, Economic Development and Realtors
- Come up with key target markets and opportunities to reach these markets
- Develop branding/marketing materials based on these materials
- Surveys

Lead and Coordination

- Huron County Economic Development Services

Collaborators

- Immigration Partnership Council
- Supporting groups: Local Immigration Partnership, Tourism, Economic Development, Realtors, Planning
- Chambers of Commerce
- Municipal Tourism Departments
- Huron Business Development Corporation

Measures of Success

- Launch the www.makehuronhome.ca portal in Summer 2012
- Development of marketing/promotional materials for Make Huron Home
- Broad distribution and awareness raising of portal site and materials developed

Timeline

This action will be implemented by the end of 2012.



Community Needs

Goal: Huron County residents value and support community organizations and services which promote culture, diversity, recreation, education, entertainment, affordable housing and health.

Strategy: Support and Build Arts, Culture, and Heritage Programs to Inspire and Foster Creative Energy in Huron County (CN1)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Arts and Culture Resource Hub

Description

Working with the Cultural Services Coordinator, facilitate the establishment of an arts and culture resource hub which will support the development of arts, culture, and heritage efforts in Huron County. Activities will include:

- A kick-off forum to bring together all of the different arts and culture organizations together for an information sharing and brainstorming session;
- Identifying the resources needed to establish and operate the hub (e.g. assistance with grants, bookings, social enterprise, skills development programs for leaders, revenue generation etc.);
- Communications;
- Networking;
- Guidance and assistance with project development.

This action is expected to assist in ensuring a thriving arts and culture community which will foster creative energy, make Huron County an attractive place to live and work, and contribute to positive economic returns through tourism. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes:

- Community Needs (Community/Social Pillar)
- Population (Community/Social Pillar)
- Economy (Economic Pillar)
- Liveable Communities (Environmental Integrity Pillar)

Actions will include

- Identify key leads from the Sustainable Huron Committee
- Develop an action team (Huron County member, Huron County Arts and Culture Coordinator, Huron Arts and Heritage Network)
- Develop goals of project and set clear tasks for coordinator
- Coordinator to undertake outreach with arts and culture groups to understand their needs
- Develop resource hub

- Get resources/information online

Lead and Coordination

- Huron Arts and Heritage Network

Resources

- Huron County Cultural Services

Collaborators

- Local Theatres
- Sustainable Huron Steering Committee Members
- Outreach to all local arts/cultural groups

Measures of Success

- Strategy is developed
- Action team is in place

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2013.



Healthy Active and Liveable Communities

Goal: Huron County residents live active, healthy lifestyles with access to wellness services for mind and body. Communities will be compact, pedestrian, and bicycle friendly, and provide a range of services and facilities.

Strategy: Strongly support active transportation in our communities as part of a multi-modal transportation network (HAC3 and LC4)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Enhance opportunities for active transportation in Huron County.

"Think of your city, town or village as an exercise machine." – Dr. Avi. Friedman

Description

Promote and support active transportation in Huron. Results from this action will support strategies in the following theme areas:

- Transportation (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Community Needs (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Liveable Communities (Environmental Integrity Pillar)

Activities will include

- Organize a core team from Transportation Task Force to oversee the objectives of this initiative.
- Bring trail groups together to share best practices, successes, and encourage trail development, enhancement and maintenance.
- Determine viability of a community fund that encourages and supports trail development work (e.g. that is a % of highway budgets that can be allocated to trail development for enhancement, upkeep and signage).
- Inventory and promote bike facilities at municipal and institutional destinations. Ensure that bike rack installation is a consideration in all new commercial development and report findings.
- Consider solutions for active transportation in rural areas and communities.

Lead

- Transportation Task Force

Resources

- Huron County Health Unit

Collaborators

- Huron County Planning and Development Department
- Municipalities
- Trail Groups
- Schools and Universities
- Service Clubs
- Businesses
- Canada Walks/WalkON
- Conservation Authorities
- Ontario Trails Association
- Local media
- Gateway Rural Health Institute

Measures of Success

- Completion of walkability plans
- Municipal bike rack inventory completion
- Number of bike racks
- Collection of active transportation stories
- Kilometres of trails in Huron County determined

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2013.



Transportation

Goal: Huron County will have a transportation network, emphasizing active transportation and providing multi-modal options, such as walking, cycling, roads, rail, water, and air transit that meets the needs of the entire community.

Strategy: Develop an Accessible, Efficient, Integrated, Multi-Modal Transportation Network (TR1)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Review the Transportation Demand Management study recommendations to pursue alternative opportunities for getting people around in Huron.

Description

This project will address the needs of people in Huron County who for economic or physical reasons do not own or operate a private vehicle. Results from this action will support strategies under the following Theme Areas:

- Transportation (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Community Needs (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Liveable Communities (Environmental Integrity Pillar)

Activities will include

- Establish sub-group from Transportation Task Force to focus on this priority.
- Look at composition of transportation task force and ensure broad representation.
- Review the Transportation Demand Management study.
- Investigate/explore funding.
- Liaise with the list of organizations who are doing this work.
- Explore best practices in other communities.
- Develop and implement strategy/plan.

Lead

- Transportation Task Force

Resources

- Huron County Social Services Department

Collaborators

- Easy ride
- United Way
- One Care
- Hospitals
- Seniors Homes
- Taxi companies
- School bus companies
- Gateway
- Perth County

Measures of Success

- Sub-group is formed
- Strategy or plan is underway
- Funding is received

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2015.



Liveable Communities

Goal: Huron County will retain its rural character through planned growth of its settlement areas
Communities will be: compact, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and provide a range of services and facilities.

Strategy: Preserve Huron County’s History and Rural Character

PRIORITY PROJECT: The School Yard Planting Project

Description

This project will be the expansion of the early win that created naturalized outdoor classrooms at three of Huron’s elementary schools. This project will improve the quality of existing natural areas, provide shade and wind protection, foster natural environment and ecological awareness, provide erosion control, and engage youth to create meaningful change. This project helps to showcase sustainability in action by engaging youth in the plan. The results of this action will support strategies under the following themes:

- Natural Environment (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Community Needs (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Economy (Economic Pillar)

Activities will include

- Expanding the pilot project to all schools in the County

Lead

- Avon Maitland District School Board and Huron Perth Catholic District School Board
- Foundation For Education

Resources

- Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authorities

Collaborators

- School Boards
- Foundation for Education
- Huron County Health Department
- Huron County Planning and Development Department

Measures of Success

- Number of schoolyard planting projects

Timeline

This action will be completed when all Huron Schools have a naturalized outdoor classroom / garden.



Huron County is one of the most agriculturally productive areas in Canada. Even with the great momentum in the County for local food, the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee identified the opportunity to continue to help strengthen and build capacity for the local food movement in areas such as distribution, processing, and product development.

Sustainability in Action

Food Enterprise Opportunities Project

Huron County is one of the most agriculturally rich areas in Canada – with an output second to none in Ontario (except Essex County when greenhouse produce is included). Even with the great momentum in the County for local food, the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee identified the opportunity to continue to help strengthen and build capacity for the local food movement in areas such as distribution, processing, and product development. In order to help work towards solutions to these issues, Sustainable Huron embarked on a partnership with Huron Perth Farm to Table to help develop and support initiatives pertaining to local food, through the Food Opportunities Project.

Huron Perth Farm to Table is a network of community organizations who share concerns about access to local, healthy food. The goals of the group include educating consumers about food, nutrition and agricultural issues, creating new markets for local farmers, enhancing food security and increasing public access to nutritious food.

The Food Opportunities Project helps to support niche farming groups by funding and supporting events such as *producer study clubs*. This initiative began in April 2011. The study clubs help producers identify and understand new markets, and help them with market entry preparation and strategy. Moving forward, this project will continue to look into how to create new marketing vehicles for existing farm products, develop producer/small business capacity to launch new food ventures, and implement marketing campaigns helping to promote the local food movement for Huron and Perth Counties.

Sustainable Huron also supports the Bruce-Huron (B-H) Wholesale Produce Auction. The B-H Produce Auction runs from May – October featuring a variety of products based on the season. Sellers at the auction reside within a 75 kilometre radius from Lucknow. Registered buyers are welcome to bid on the array of products which range from plants to fresh fruits and vegetables.

It is evident that the momentum for “buying local” is continuing to be a priority in Huron County as producers and consumers alike recognize the importance of healthy eating, the unbeatable freshness that comes just just-picked food, as well as the desire to support their neighbour.

Economy and Downtowns

Goal: The Huron County economy will continue to provide economic security and opportunity for its residents through diversification, business retention, local provision, education and training opportunities.

Strategy: Assist with the Retention and Expansion of Local Businesses (EC4)

Goal: The downtowns in Huron County will be active and healthy centres of commerce, government and culture, capitalizing on historic character, locally-owned businesses, and people-friendly spaces.

Strategy: Develop a County-Wide Downtown Strategy that Builds on Current Initiatives and Can be Adapted and Implemented by all Municipalities in Towns and Villages (DT1)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Continue to encourage Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) programs and implement effective strategies; and share best practices among towns and villages to ensure progress and development.

Description

Ensuring that our businesses stay strong and prosperous is a huge part of our economic development in Huron County. A number of BR&E initiatives are already occurring in Huron County towns and villages. Sharing best practices and building on successes will help ensure sustainability for businesses in Huron County. Results from this action will support strategies in the following theme areas:

- Economy (Economic Security Pillar)
- Downtowns (Economic Security Pillar)
- Population (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Community Needs (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)

Activities will include

- Identify more ways to become business friendly
- Review by-laws of downtown buildings (i.e. multi-use)
- All downtowns need to complete BR&E
- Need to provide funding to implement strategies
- Create economic development marketing tools

- Host a bus tour for Municipal staff and Council that would illustrate best practices in Huron County.
- Conduct “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats” analysis as part of current BR&E programs.

Lead

- Huron Economic Development Partnership (County – HBDC – OMAFRA)

Resources

- The Huron Business Development Corporation (HBDC)
- Huron County Planning and Development Department
- Rural Economic Development Program

Collaborators

- Municipalities
- Chamber(s) of Commerce
- Business Improvement Associations (BIAs)
- Local employers or businesses in Huron County

Measures of Success

- Number of BR&E studies underway
- Funding received

Timeline

All interested towns and villages will complete a BR&E study by the end of 2014, followed by implementation.



Robyn Doig, Youth Contest Entry

Agriculture and Food

Goal: Huron County will have a strong and diversified agricultural industry, providing food to the local community and beyond using environmental best practices.

Strategy: Continue to Build Support and Momentum for Local Food in Huron County Communities and Neighbouring Region (AG3)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Increase the profile of local food as a means to diversify and enhance the local farm economy and promote healthy eating.

Description

Recognizing that there are new and emerging opportunities in the local food sector that can contribute to agriculture viability, a local food project will be implemented that increases the profile of local food in Huron County. Results from this action will support strategies in the following theme areas:

- Agriculture (Economic Security Pillar)
- Economy (Economic Security Pillar)
- Population (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Natural Environment (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Healthy Active Communities (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Community Needs (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)

Activities will include

- Work with general farms organizations and other groups to identify local food opportunities.
- Coordination and focus of ongoing local food action plans with emphasis on a bulk food auction, promotion of local food processing.

Lead

- Huron Perth Farm to Table

Resources

- Huron Business Development Corporation (HBDC)
- Huron County Health Unit

Collaborators

- Farmers' Markets
- Bruce-Huron Wholesale Produce Auction
- General Farm Organizations and Commodity Groups
- Individual producers
- REACH

Measures of Success

- Number of new local food producers
- Expanded Good Food Box program
- Increase in local food sales (public, retail/restaurant/institutional)

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2013



Agriculture and Food

Goal: Huron County will have a strong and diversified agricultural industry, providing food to the local community and beyond using environmental best practices.

Strategy: Strengthen Huron County's Agriculture Industry (AG 1)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Engage and embrace the role of youth in entrepreneurship, starting with agriculture.

Description

This project will focus on the development of a local agricultural leadership program which will promote careers in agriculture, and allow youth to identify their own entrepreneurial endeavours, and it will also focus on succession planning. Results from this action will support strategies in the following theme areas:

- Agriculture (Economic Security Pillar)
- Economy (Economic Security Pillar)
- Population (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Natural Environment (Environmental Integrity Pillar)
- Healthy Active Communities (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)
- Community Needs (Community and Social Well Being Pillar)

Activities will include

- Identify and apply for funding
- Identify and promote communications and materials that are already available
- Investigate the role of social media
- Develop an agriculture youth strategy

Lead

- Huron Federation of Agriculture
- National Farmers Union (co-lead)
- Christian Farmers Federation (co-lead)

Resources

- Huron Business Development Corporation
- Huron Small Business Enterprise Centre
- Ontario Federation of Agriculture

- Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator(s)

Collaborators

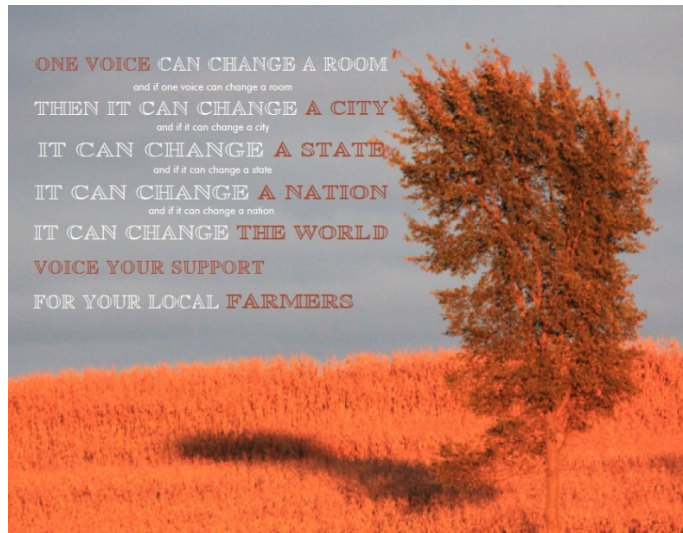
- REACH (potential to lead)
- University of Guelph
- Agriculture high school majors
- Business
- Junior farmers
- 4H
- Huron County Health Department

Measures of Success

- Funding is obtained
- Strategy is developed

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2015



Ronnie Verduyssen, Youth Contest Entry

Community Needs

Goal: Huron County residents value and support community organizations and services which promote culture, diversity, recreation, education, entertainment, affordable housing and health.

Strategy: Ensure Huron County is affordable and accessible for all residents (CN2)

PRIORITY PROJECT: Lens of Sustainability.

Description

Develop a “lens of sustainability” to ensure that decisions are being made to reflect the principles of sustainability. The first step will be to develop a lens that focuses on inclusivity and affordability in all programs and events in Huron County. This “lens” would be widely distributed and ideally sit on everyone’s desk as they plan events. The results of this action will support strategies under all of the themes identified.

Activities will include

- Review and adapt the community planning lens from the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health
- Review the sustainability principles that have been established for Huron County
- Create the lens of sustainability as one of the first outcomes of this plan
- Share with stakeholders, clients and the community

Lead

- Huron County Health Unit

Collaborators

- All interested organizations in Huron County

Measures of Success

- Lens of sustainability is developed
- Number of people using the lens of sustainability

Timeline

This action will be completed by the end of 2012.

The Manufacturing Efficiencies Project is a project that crosses two sustainability pillars: it aims to help local companies identify opportunities to decrease their impact on the environment while making their business more efficient and improving their bottom line.

Sustainability in Action

Manufacturing Efficiencies Project

The Manufacturing Efficiencies Project is a project that crosses two sustainability pillars: it aims to help local companies identify opportunities to decrease their impact on the environment while making their business more efficient and improving their bottom line.

Manufacturers of Huron County were invited to participate in this project which is a partnership between Sustainable Huron project, the Huron Manufacturing Association (HMA) and the Midwestern Green Jobs Strategy.



Two pilot companies were selected to participate in this exciting initiative and have received professional guidance on integrating cost-effective sustainability solutions such as identifying eco and energy efficiencies in their business. Local consulting firm, Kuzuka partnered with The Tavares Group in London to develop and deliver the efficiencies project with assistance from Huron Business Development Centre and Huron County Planning and Development Department staff.

To complement the sustainable business strategy, all Huron manufacturers will also receive a made in Huron sustainable business toolkit equipped with the tools and tips that will aid a business in identifying and increasing efficiencies, reducing their environmental impact and contributing to the local community all while striving to reduce overall costs! The toolkit was launched at the 2011 HMA Awards Banquet and will be available for all Huron County manufacturers on the HMA website.

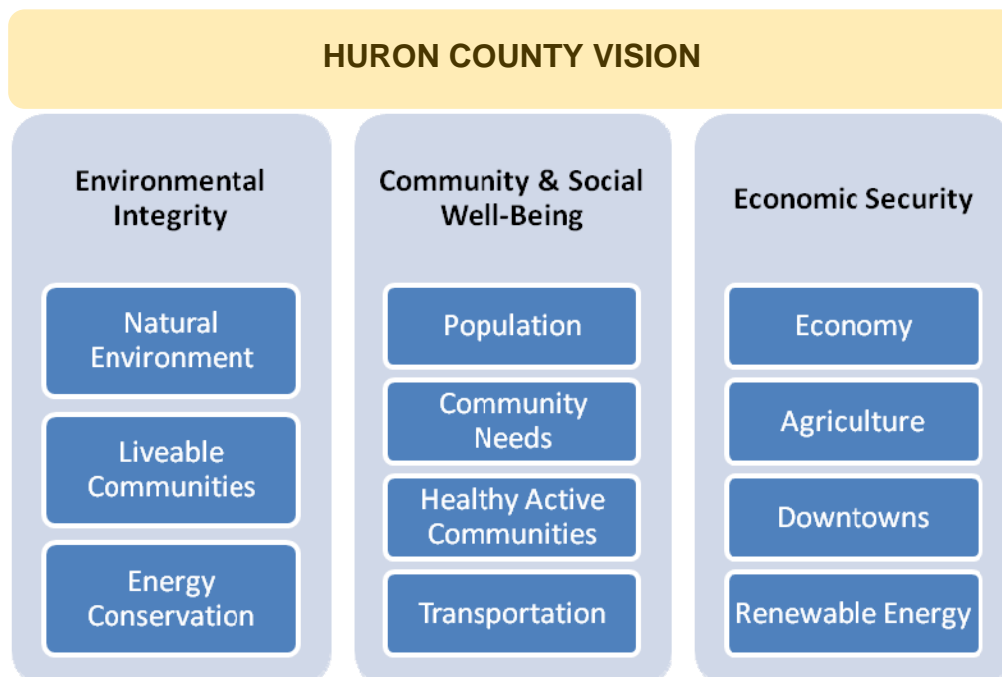
To follow the development of this project, check out the YouTube videos which provide interviews with the pilot companies and will help to document their experience with integrating sustainability into their business (links to the videos can be found on the HMA website).

Developing the Plan

The Sustainability Plan is made up of the following components

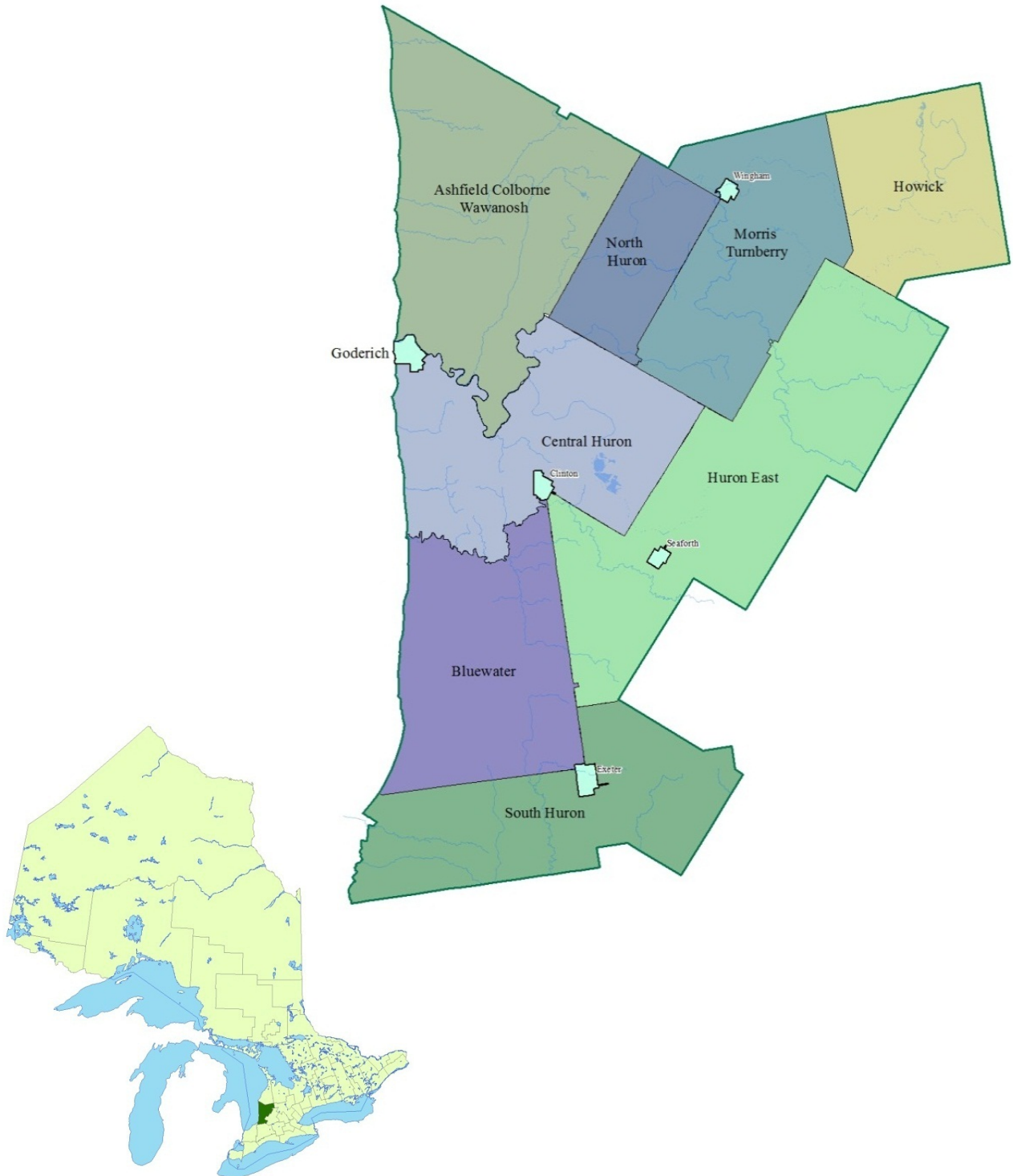
- Vision Statement;
- Community Goals for 2030 (by Theme);
- Strategies (by Theme);
- Priority Projects;
- Immediate and Future Actions (Appendix A); and
- Implementation Plan.

The Community Vision for Huron County is the over-arching vision for the three pillars of sustainability. The 11 Theme areas have been assigned to a pillar, however the strategies and actions within each theme typically cross two or three of the pillars.



Geographic Scope of the Plan

This plan applies to all of our communities within the boundaries of Huron County – including our rural areas, our towns and villages, our larger urban centres, our shorelines, and our natural environment.



Where Are We Now?

Huron County is unique. We are one of the most agriculturally productive counties in Ontario – with over 292,000 hectares of farmland – and a leader and award-winner in agricultural technology and innovation. We have over 100 km of shoreline, earning us the nickname “Ontario’s West Coast”. We are a primarily rural community with urban amenities, and with that comes supportive neighbours and a large volunteer base. We have heritage buildings, picturesque country-sides, walking and biking trails, excellent health care facilities, and more. All of these together make us proud to call Huron County home.

However Huron County is not without its challenges. Conversations with residents and a review of the state and gaps in Huron County (Current Conditions Report 2011) illustrated several challenges we face in each sustainability pillar.

Environmental Challenges

- Loss of forests, wetlands and other habitats;
- Climate impacts on agricultural lands and municipal infrastructure;
- Impact on water quality from soil erosion, agricultural runoff, and stormwater management; and
- Dependency on single-occupancy vehicles.

Social/Community Challenges

- Rural isolation and accessible/affordable transportation;
- Out-migration of youth searching for better opportunities;
- Access to health and wellness services and programs;
- An aging population;
- Insufficient affordable housing; and
- Cost of maintaining and upgrading infrastructure.

Economic Challenges

- Retaining businesses in downtowns;
- Declining workforce and associated “brain-drain”;
- Succession planning for an aging farming population;
- Regional systems to ensure access to local foods; and
- Balancing green energy generation with community goals.

Opportunities for a Sustainable Future

It is our strengths in Huron County that make us more resilient to the changes that we will face in the future, including:

- A beautiful natural environment (Lake Huron shorelines, agricultural landscapes, and more);
- Extensive network of recreational trails;
- Cultural heritage and streetscapes;
- Strong agricultural community with fertile farmlands;
- Lower cost of living and high quality of life;
- Strong economic organizations and support;
- A sense of community;
- Recreational amenities;
- Strong tourism base – people want to come here;
- Transportation infrastructure, including small airports and Port of Goderich;
- An entrepreneurial spirit; and
- A conservation ethic to protect our natural resources.

The Huron County Sustainability plan will, using our strengths as the foundation, help address our current challenges and build a more sustainable future

Community Feedback: Huron County Priorities

Huron County businesses, organizations, government agencies, and general public spoke about their priorities for Huron's future through the many engagement approaches discussed previously. These community priorities were the cornerstone of developing the Huron County Sustainability Plan, and have been addressed throughout the strategies and actions in the Huron County Sustainability Tool-Box (Appendix A). Highlights of these community priorities are summarized below.

Environmental Priorities:

- Ecosystem restoration and protection – including tree planting on unfarmed land and along creeks and rivers;
- Strategies for addressing climate change issues;
- Energy efficiency and conservation;
- Landscaping that decreases lawn acreage; and
- Community power generation (solar, etc.).

Community and Social Priorities:

- A welcoming community to new residents and visitors;
- Community pride and ownership;
- Funding for the arts;
- Developing the next generation of community leaders;
- Compact communities that are walk-able;
- Connections to service providers outside Huron County;
- Enhanced mental health resources and public awareness;

- Addressing homelessness and affordable housing; and
- Walking and biking trails and active transportation.

Economic Priorities

- Agri-food and agri-business;
- Manufacturing and industry;
- Retail and service;
- Tourism and hospitality;
- Culture and the creative economy;
- Attracting more families;
- Retaining and attracting youth to Huron County employment opportunities (especially in healthcare, agriculture, small business entrepreneurship, and manufacturing); and
- Infrastructure (broadband).

Community Questionnaire

Over 600 Huron County community members completed an on-line survey providing their input on priorities and suggested actions for the Sustainability Plan. Survey respondents provided the following information when asked to rank their top priority areas:

1. Economy

- Diversification of employment opportunities
- Responsible development
- Downtowns
- Tax reform
- High speed internet
- Retaining and re-attracting Huron County's youth – through meaningful employment, local education opportunities etc.
- Affordable housing

2. Natural environment

- Protecting natural areas
- Decreasing impacts on water quality from agricultural run-off, erosion, stormwater management
- Waste diversion (composting, recycling etc.)
- Active transportation
- Green energy (with appropriate regulation)

3. Agriculture

- Increasing agricultural niche markets
- Improving access to local food
- Sustainable agricultural practices

"The best way to predict the future is to create it." Peter F. Drucker

Goals and Strategies

These are the broad strategies which together map out how we will achieve our Vision. The complete list of actions is in the **Huron County Sustainability Tool Box (Appendix A)**.

Pillar: Environmental Integrity

Theme: Natural Environment

Goal: Huron County will have a healthy, resilient ecosystem with connected natural areas, clean water, and diverse flora and fauna.

- NE1. Protect The County's Natural Heritage and Connectivity
- NE2. Ensure that the Ecosystems within Huron County are Healthy and Resilient by Supporting Our Native Biodiversity
- NE3. Maintain, Protect and Improve the Quality and Quantity of Huron County's Surface and Groundwater Resources
- NE4. Reduce the Amount of Toxins and Waste Entering Huron County's Environment
- NE5. Increase Huron County's Contribution to Mitigating the Effects of Climate Change by Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Theme: Energy Conservation

Goal: Huron County will maximize energy conservation.

- ENCO1. Foster an Energy Conscious Culture Throughout Huron County
- ENCO2. Exhibit Municipal Leadership in Energy Awareness and Use
- ENCO3. Maximize Energy Conservation Within the Development and Building Industry

Theme: Liveable Communities

Goal: Huron County will retain its rural character through appropriate rural development and planned growth of its settlement areas. Communities will be compact, pedestrian, and bicycle friendly, and provide a range of services and facilities.

- LC1. Preserve Huron County’s History and Rural Character
- LC2. Foster Compact Liveable Communities That Address Community Needs
- LC3. Create Long-Term Infrastructure Plans that Support Appropriate Services, Facilities and Amenities for Liveable Communities
- LC4. Create a Multi-Modal Transportation Network Which Strongly Supports Active Transportation
- LC5. Mitigate the Impacts of Big Box Development



Pillar: Community and Social Well-Being

Theme: Population

Goal: Huron County will sustain a moderate population growth with increased ethnic diversity by retaining current residents, welcoming new residents, and developing opportunities for youth, families and seniors.

- POP1. Support a Moderate and Sustainable Population Growth with Increased Ethnic Diversity
- POP2. Market and Promote Huron County as a Great Place To Live and Vacation
- POP3. Ensure that Huron County is a Welcoming Community for New Residents and Families
- POP4. Foster and Enhance Opportunities for all Demographics (Youth, Families, and Seniors)

Theme: Community Needs

Goal: Huron County residents will value and support community organizations and services which promote culture, diversity, recreation, education, entertainment, affordable housing and health.

- CN1. Support and Build Arts, Culture, and Heritage Programs to Inspire and Foster Creative Energy in Huron County
- CN2. Ensure Huron County is Affordable and Accessible for All Residents
- CN3. Encourage, Support and Ensure that Opportunities for Meaningful Higher Learning Experiences Exist in Huron County
- CN4. Foster Pride, Sense of Community, and Support in Huron County

Theme: Healthy Active Communities

Goal: Huron County residents will live active, healthy lifestyles with access to wellness services for mind and body.

- HAC1. Promote Active and Healthy Lifestyles to Huron County Residents
- HAC2. Strongly Support Active Transportation in Our Communities
- HAC3. Ensure Huron County Residents Have Access to Excellent Health and Wellness Services to Support Healthy Bodies, Minds, and Communities

Theme: Transportation

Goal: Huron County will have a transportation network, emphasizing active transportation and providing multi-modal options, such as walking, cycling, roads, rail, water, and air transit that meets the needs of the entire community.

- TR1. Develop an Accessible, Efficient, Integrated, Multi-Modal Transportation Network
- TR2. Ensure Huron County's Municipal Transportation System is Environmentally and Economically Responsible

Pillar: Economic Security

Theme: Economy

Goal: The Huron County economy will continue to provide economic security and opportunity for its residents through diversification, business retention, local provision, education and training opportunities.

- EC1. Ensure a Diversity of Economic Opportunities Within Huron County to Enhance Economic Security
- EC2. Provide Local Education and Training Opportunities Which Will Support the Diverse Huron County Economy
- EC3. Strive to Create a Huron County Economy That Supports the Triple Bottom Line and Ensures the Best Use of Financial, Social, and Natural Resources
- EC4. Assist with the Retention and Expansion of Local Businesses
- EC5. Promote Tourism and Enhance Sustainable Tourism Practices in Huron County

Theme: Agriculture and Food

Goal: Huron County will have a strong and diversified agricultural industry, providing food to the local community and beyond using environmental best practices.

- AG1. Strengthen Huron County's Agriculture Industry
- AG2. Support a Diversified Agriculture Sector
- AG3. Continue to Build Support and Momentum for Local Food in Huron County Communities and Neighbouring Regions
- AG4. Promote and Market the Use of Environmental Best Practices in the Agricultural Industry



Wayne C.

Theme: Downtowns

Goal: The downtowns in Huron County will be active and healthy centres of commerce, government and culture, capitalizing on historic character, locally-owned businesses, and people-friendly spaces.

- DT1. Develop a County-Wide Downtown BR&E Strategy that Builds on Current Initiatives and Can be Adopted and Implemented by all Municipalities in Towns and Villages
- DT2. Create Accessible, Aesthetically Pleasing, People-Friendly Spaces within Our Downtowns
- DT3. Foster the Development of Downtowns as Healthy Centres of Commerce, Government, and Culture, Where People Will Want to Live, Shop and Work



Theme: Renewable Energy

Goal: Huron County will utilize local renewable energy sources.

GE1. Maximize Appropriate Local Energy Generation in Huron County



Brandon Sallow, Youth Contest Entry

Implementation Plan

Taking Action to Reach Our Vision

The Implementation framework is designed to detail how the actions will be implemented, who will be responsible, the mechanisms to succeed, and the partnerships required.

Leadership and Champions

Sustainable Huron Steering Committee

The Sustainable Huron Steering Committee will meet quarterly to discuss progress and implementation of the priority projects. The Committee will act as a sounding board to the sustainability coordinator, connectors, project leads and partners to ensure that they are moving towards implementing the projects. A Terms of Reference, including Governance and Communication, will be developed once the plan is approved.

Sustainability Coordinator

A full time staff member/coordinator position is recommended with the overall responsibility to oversee and act as the one-window for sustainability plan implementation. The sustainability coordinator is the integral person that will ensure that Take Action Huron is implemented. The following tasks/roles will be part of the coordinators position:

- Coordinate and organize meetings and provide administrative/project support to the sustainability leads and project partners
- Will research and source funding
- Assemble an annual “state of sustainability in Huron” report
- Organize an annual sustainability forum which will bring together all interested stakeholders to discuss the different projects, have updates, and ensure open communication
- Track and record actions
- Connect people to projects and initiatives that promote sustainability in Huron County
- Contact partners, connectors and committee members
- Communicate the success and progress of this plan

While the presence of a sustainability coordinator will ensure that the list above will be able to be achieved, there are no limitations on what a group(s) or organization can achieve on advancing priorities (or actions) listed within the Sustainability plan.

Sustainability Connectors

People with Huron County will continue to be identified to represent each of the pillars of sustainability (economy, environment, and socio-cultural). Connectors will be identified based on

their ability to build partnerships and to help support development of priority projects. In addition applications will be sought to fill the other seats on the committee.

Project Based Members

Project based members will be invited to attend meetings in order to ensure that the progress of each project is being discussed, documented and reported on. Each project lead will work closely with the sustainability coordinator. Project based members will participate on the committee for the duration of the project.

Partners

As Sustainable Huron moves into implementation, organizations, groups, members and municipalities will be asked to commit to be an action partner towards implementation. Each partner will be asked to sign a commitment towards sustainability, and will be asked to approve, in principle the vision and goals for Sustainable Huron.

Each partner will be invited to participate in the annual sustainability forum and also celebrate any actions that they have participated in or implemented that move Huron towards sustainability.

Partners will be asked to review the tool-box and select or add any additional actions that they are implementing.

Communication and Awareness

Annual Sustainability Forum

An annual event will be organized to communicate and celebrate the success of sustainability in Huron County. During the forum participants will be invited to learn about the priority project implementation, and will select new projects to move forward, participants will also be invited to become partners towards the vision of sustainability in Huron.

Sustainability Conversations

Periodically, conversations focusing on sustainability, the themes or any ideas about the future of Huron County will be held. This will ensure that creativity, collaboration and interesting conversations are continued through implementation.

Engagement and Communications

A “state of sustainability” newsletter will be developed to update community members, partners and anyone who is interested in implementation. The newsletter will showcase success stories, partner profiles, and will provide an update on each of the priority projects as they roll out and are implemented.

Social media will be used to continually get the word out about Sustainable Huron’s progress.

A communications strategy (including Social Media) will be developed as part of the first task of setting up the implementation.

Accountability

Progress Reporting

Progress on the plan's implementation will be reported annually. The coordinator will be responsible for putting together the "state of sustainability" report each year. This report will showcase success on each of the priority projects; and provide an update on how Huron is moving towards the selected indicators.

Priority Project Selection

It is recommended that new actions/priority projects are selected every year (or two years) to ensure Huron is moving towards sustainability.

Third Party Auditors

It is recommended that a third party auditor/facilitator is brought in on a bi-annual basis to review the success of implementation.

Full Sustainability Plan Review

It is recommended that every five years the Sustainability Plan is reviewed and revised according to the newly identified priorities – and successes achieved.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators

The Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators (ESDI) Initiative has produced a set of six indicators to track whether Canada's current economic activities threaten the way of life for future generations. Huron County will utilize this set of indicators as an overall measurement towards sustainability.

1. **Air** quality in terms of ground-level ozone.
2. **Freshwater** quality in terms of meeting government criteria.
3. **Greenhouse gas** emissions.
4. **Forest cover** to track the extent of our forests.
5. Extent of **wetlands** in Huron County.
6. **Human capital** measured by **education**.

Priority Project Indicators

In order to track overall sustainability and success in Huron – the following indicators will be used.

- Percentage of native forest cover
- Number of blue flag beaches
- Number of farms participating in environmental farm plans
- Municipal energy consumption
- Average commuter distance / year
- Net in-migration of youth 25 - 30
- Population
- Median age of population
- Number of farmers under 40
- Number of private and public art spaces, culture & heritage programs
- Kilometres of recreation trails, bike lanes per capita
- Number of hospital beds, long-term care beds
- Special transit ridership
- Businesses open/closed or #of businesses belonging to a BIA or Chamber
- Number of good food boxes purchased/Number of farmer's markets operating
- Number of residents below LICO/Number of residents on affordable housing list

Appendices

Appendix A: Huron County Sustainability Tool-Box

Appendix B: Community Partners Commitment to the Plan

Appendix C: Current Conditions Report 2011





Appendix A Sustainability Tool-Box

TAKE ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE HURON



Under the Direction of: The Sustainable
Huron Steering Committee
Huron County

December 2011

"Invest a decade to prosper a century."
Dr. Avi Friedman

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The preparation of this sustainable community plan was carried out with assistance from the Green Municipal Fund, a Fund financed by the Government of Canada and administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Notwithstanding this support, the views expressed are the personal views of the authors, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Government of Canada accept no responsibility for them.

This plan was prepared by Lura Consulting, under the direction of the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee.



Huron County Sustainability Tool-Box

This Sustainability Tool-Box is a guide to help Huron County along its path to sustainability. It is a collection of strategies and actions for a sustainable future that are tailored specifically to the context of Huron County. The actions come from multiple sources, including the Steering Committee and associated partners, existing County plans, and the public through the consultation process. Some actions can be done in a short time frame, while some will take longer to get going. This list is dynamic – it will be revised regularly to match the current contexts and conditions in Huron County, the progress that has been made to date in reaching our sustainability vision and goals, and any revised strategies to better reach those goals. By applying the sustainability decision-making framework, Huron County and partnering organizations can prioritize and select actions to carry out annually to reach the 2030 community vision.

Organizations and partners are invited to select actions that they are already doing or would like to do – once selected partners should contact Sustainable Huron to identify that they will be initiating a sustainability action.

The actions are organized under the 11 Theme Areas. Each theme area includes:

- **Community Goal Statement** – this is where the community would like to be with respect to each theme area by 2030.
- **Strategies** - broad strategies outlining the bigger paths Huron County will use to reach the community vision.
- **Actions** – specific actions to fulfill what is outlined under each strategy.
- **Targets** – a sample of targets Huron County is reaching for in implementing the strategies and actions.
- **Indicators** – possible indicators that could be used to assess how well we are doing at reaching the targets and goals for actions under each strategy.

Environmental Integrity

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Huron County will have a healthy, resilient ecosystem with connected natural areas, clean water, and diverse flora and fauna

NE1. Protect The County's Natural Heritage And Connectivity

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Protected Areas and Connections

- Develop a natural capital/features database which surveys all natural capital in Huron County (e.g. wildlife corridors, wetlands, riparian zones, forests)

Education and Awareness

- Promote the use of the rural landowner stewardship guide and other approaches to increase awareness of protecting ecosystem integrity:
 - the value of buffer strips for both natural area protection and adaptation to climate change impacts
 - protecting shorelines
 - removal of non-native species and replanting with native species
- Support environmental education and nature based education programs for all ages

Shorelines

- Explore potential for protecting the Lake Huron shoreline from erosion through “soft engineering”

TARGETS

- 100% of all locally and provincially significant natural areas in Huron County (e.g. wetlands, riparian zones, Lake Huron shorelines) are protected and connected
- 20-25% forest cover in County
- All Lake Huron shoreline is natural and is protected from erosion
- Awareness among 100% of Huron County population on the importance of protecting natural areas

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Protected Areas and Connections

- Through existing and new natural area protection regulations, protect and enhance natural areas (e.g. wetlands, woodlands, floodplains, the Lake Huron shoreline, etc.)
- Identify and develop connections to Hullett Marsh, Bannockburn, Hay Swamp, Saratoga Swamp, Maitland Valley, and Bayfield River Valley
- Engage in habitat restoration along creeks using native plants and shrubs
- Explore reforestation and sustainable forestry as a Huron County industry

Urban Areas

- Develop and implement urban forest strategies including urban woodlands, heritage trees, and reforestation

Shorelines

- Secure funding for shoreline remedial work where such work is needed
- Attain Blue-flag certification for all beaches

INDICATORS

- Number of significant natural / heritage areas; % native forest cover
- Area / km of connecting habitats (corridors)
- Degree of fragmentation
- Km of riparian and Lake Huron shoreline protected / restored
- % awareness among population as to importance of natural areas
- Number of landowners involved in stewardship practices

NE2. Ensure that the Ecosystems Within Huron County are Healthy and Resilient by Supporting Our Native Biodiversity

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Invasive Species

- Conduct an inventory of native and non-native plant and animal species
- Develop policies to prevent import/ transport of non-native invasive species to / within Huron County

Native Species and Biodiversity

- Promote the planting / replanting of native species (e.g. trees, shrubs, grasses) on private property, marginal agricultural and sensitive lands, and forest regeneration
- Promote naturalized lawns on public lands as a way to reduce lawn maintenance and increase natural habitat (**see also LC3**)

TARGETS

- Rare and endangered species are protected
- Species moved from rare/endangered to lower COSEWIC status

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Invasive Species

- Design removal/control programs for non-native invasive species (e.g. purple loosestrife, garlic mustard)

Native Species and Biodiversity

- Secure federal/provincial funds for protection, rehabilitation and/or re-introduction of rare, endangered and locally extinct species
- Habitat and corridor protected strategies under NE1
- Research genetic “fingerprints” for rare/endangered species

INDICATORS

- # of rare / endangered species;
- # of non-native invasive species (plants and animals)

NE2. Ensure that the Ecosystems Within Huron County are Healthy and Resilient by Supporting Our Native Biodiversity

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- # non-native species reduced by 25%; area of invasion reduced by 50%
- Native species richness increased by 25%

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- species richness of native species

NE3. Maintain, Protect and Improve the Quality and Quantity of Huron County's Surface and Groundwater Resources

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Priority Project: Develop a foundation for rural storm water management plans across all watersheds in Huron County (see page 9)

Water Quality Protection

- Ensure phosphorus removal at waste water treatment plants is effective, and explore its removal at smaller plants
- Monitor septic systems for *E. coli*
- Support the agricultural industry (farms and feedlots) in developing and implementing sustainable practices (e.g. manure management plans, reduced fertilizer use, and Integrated Pest Management to reduce pesticide use)
- Ensure safe drinking water supplies

Lake Huron Shoreline

- Develop strategies to maintain water quality along Lake Huron shoreline for recreational uses (e.g. swimming, boating)

Education and Awareness

- Develop and implement public education and outreach programs on:
 - the proper maintenance of septic systems;
 - proper disposal of hazardous chemicals; and
 - water conservation measures (combined with water meter installations)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Water Quality Protection

- Establish a permanent Hazardous Household Waste disposal depot
- Assist public with addressing septic systems failure
- Ensure proper storm water management through:
 - soft engineering (reducing hardened surfaces where feasible)
 - disconnecting downspouts from drains
 - constructing surface retention facilities to store excess runoff
- Reduce salt use in de-icing

Groundwater Source Protection

- Develop source water protection plans for all groundwater sources of potable water, ensuring that groundwater is not overexploited

Lake Huron Shoreline

- Expand Huron County Clean Water program
- Support stronger pollution-reduction standards for Lake Huron water

TARGETS

- Provincial standards are met for concentrates of P (PO₄), N (NO₃, NO₂, NH₄), chloride, pesticides, metals (Cd, Pb, Hg, Fe, Zn, etc), *E. coli*, etc.
- All Lake Huron beaches have a blue flag designation
- Hydrographs as close to 'undeveloped' as possible
- Maintain maximum base flow of water throughout the year
- 100 % of septic system owners carry out proper maintenance activities
- 100% of household hazardous chemicals disposed of at a hazardous depot
- Drinking water supplies meet federal/provincial drinking water standards

INDICATORS

- Concentration of P (PO₄) , N (NO₃, NO₂, NH₄), chloride, pesticides, metals
- *E. Coli* levels in water
- Number of blue flag beaches
- Stream flow (annual and seasonal)
- % awareness and compliance with septic system maintenance activities and hazardous waste disposal guidelines
- amount of material deposited at hazardous waste depots
- # of wells / supplies with low stress (<10% use)
- # boil water orders; # wells in compliance; # public water supplies in compliance

NE4. Reduce the Amount of Toxins and Waste Entering Huron County's Environment

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Air Quality

- Develop and implement anti-idling campaigns to reduce vehicle emissions
- Develop a strategy to reduce or eliminate open burning of garbage
- Support urban planning initiatives that integrate residences / businesses / schools / recreation (see LC2)

Waste Reduction

- Set County and municipal waste diversion targets (e.g. 60%, 70%, 80%)
- Develop and implement public education and outreach campaigns to promote the reduction and reuse of waste (e.g. through backyard composting, recycling, organic practices, green bins, etc.)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Air Quality

- Explore the use of alternative fuel transit vehicles
- Improve public transit system to reduce reliance on one-person vehicle occupancy (see LC4 and TR1)

Zero Waste Community

- Support waste reduction programs in the industrial sector
- Develop programs and policies that maximize waste diversion (recycling, hazardous waste disposal, backyard composting) and minimize the need for landfill or other solutions

TARGETS

- Reduce Huron County's contribution to poor air quality parameters by 75%
- Air Quality Health Index of 1-3 (low health risk) in urban areas
- County and municipal waste diversion targets are met
- Huron County achieves Zero Waste community status

INDICATORS

- Trends in ground level ozone (O₃); Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}/PM₁₀) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)
- Air Quality Health Index
- Total waste generated per capita (kg / person /year)
- Waste diversion rate (%)

NE5. Increase Huron County's Contribution to Mitigating the Effects of Climate Change by Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Conduct baseline research of emissions by sector (agriculture, businesses etc.), by energy source (coal, oil, natural gas, gasoline, diesel, electricity) and in County services (e.g. streetlights, vehicles, municipal buildings)

Education and Awareness

- Implement public education and outreach campaigns around reducing emissions (include contests and challenges such as Turn Out the Lights)
- Establish demonstration projects that illustrate best practices for emission reductions (e.g. demonstration farms, sustainable forestry)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Carbon Neutral Community

- Develop strategies to reduce the County's cumulative GHG emissions and move Huron County towards a carbon neutral community
- Develop a strategy for reducing dependence upon fossil fuels in an integrated manner for each of the major sectors: agriculture, tourism and forestry
- Develop and expand on the use of alternative energy sources and carbon efficient fuels in Huron County (see EG1)

See also actions under LC4 and TR1

TARGETS

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Huron County by 50%
- Reduce methane from agricultural sources by 50%

INDICATORS

- Community eCO₂ Emissions by Sector and Energy source
- Corporate greenhouse gas emissions (as eCO₂) by fuel type and use

Environmental Integrity

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Huron County will maximize energy conservation

ENCO1. Foster an Energy Conscious Culture Throughout Huron County

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Create a County-wide energy conservation working group
- Education and Awareness**
- Implement a community-based social marketing program to foster energy conservation behavioural change and increase participation in existing programs (e.g. Hydro One’s saveONenergy and Power Save Plus Program; Ontario Power Authority’s Power Pledge)
- Conduct a door-to-door energy and water conservation program combined with the installation of water meters in residential/ commercial/industrial properties
- Implement community wide competitions such as “Turn off the Lights” days, “Walk to work” days, and “Work from home” days

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Create a local utility energy conservation program with incentives for businesses, schools, government buildings, and residents
- Provide financial incentives for energy conservation

TARGETS

- Reduce energy consumption in Huron County by 25% overall and per capita by 30%

INDICATORS

- Per capita energy consumption (residential)
- Trends in energy use

ENCO2. Exhibit Municipal Leadership in Energy Awareness and Use

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Priority Project:** Municipal energy plans (see page 12)
- Develop a corporate energy policy and implement a corporate energy conservation strategy
 - Require higher energy efficiency standards for new public buildings, such as LEED certification requirements
 - Source building materials locally for municipal projects
 - Conduct an inventory of present municipal purchasing practices and develop a sustainable purchasing handbook for municipal purchasing to show where / how to buy sustainably

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Replace old, energy inefficient equipment
- Locate municipal facilities in populated areas, accessible by means of active transportation and transit
- Adopt best practice recommendations for municipal buildings identified through the Audit++ Program, including retrofits to improve energy efficiency of older municipal buildings

TARGETS

- Reduce energy consumption in Huron County by 25%
- All municipal purchases will be “green” and sustainable

INDICATORS

- Municipal energy consumption
- Degree of sustainable government purchasing

ENCO3. Maximize Energy Conservation Within the Development and Building Industry

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Capacity for Green Building and Retrofit Projects

- Create educational materials, including toolkits, that outline best practices and available resources to developers and builders
- Facilitate workshops for local builders on best practices for energy efficiency
- Provide incentives, such as tax relief programs
- Maintain a database of government programs, incentives and resources for best construction and energy efficiency practices

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Sustainable Community Design and Land Use Practices

- Research Sustainable Residential Development in the rural context (see Moving Kingston Forward: Towards Sustainable Residential Development as a starting point)
- Amend Official Plan policies and zoning regulations to reflect sustainable neighbourhood development guidelines (e.g. LEED for Neighbourhood Development Canadian pilot projects)
- Provide flexibility in the application of planning regulations for conservation and efficiency achievements

TARGETS

- Reduce energy consumption in Huron County by 25% overall

INDICATORS

- Total energy consumption in commercial and industrial sectors

Environmental Integrity

LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Huron County will retain its rural character through appropriate rural development and planned growth of its settlement areas. Communities will be compact, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and provide a range of services and facilities

LC1. Preserve Huron County's History and Rural Character

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Priority Project: The schoolyard planting project (see page 22)

Preservation of Heritage Buildings

- Increase participation in annual Doors Open events
- Continue to support and promote the Huron Heritage Fund and the implementation of Heritage Grant Programs in local municipalities
- Commemorate designated heritage buildings and promoting heritage walking tours
- Investigate the use of Heritage Property Tax Relief Programs (ss.365.2 of the Municipal Act, 2001)
- Investigate the amendment of Property Standards By-Laws to prescribe minimum standards for the maintenance of heritage buildings (ss. 35.3 and 45.1 of the Ontario Heritage Act)

Streetscapes

- Encourage the planting of indigenous tree and plant species in front yards, boulevards, commercial and institutional parking lots, green spaces, and roadsides by:
 - Collaborating with local horticultural businesses who specialize in indigenous species
 - Requiring the use of indigenous species through Site Plan Control (ss. 41(4) Planning Act)
 - Establishing municipal policies for the use of indigenous species on public properties

Shorelines

- Closely monitor development along Lake Huron shorelines and ensure it is in line with sustainability principles and protects existing natural features and character of local communities

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Preservation of Heritage Buildings

- Implement Registers for Properties of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest (ss. 27 and 39.2 of the Ontario Heritage Act)
- Investigate the designation of heritage properties and districts (Part IV or Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act)
- Develop Urban Design Guidelines for designated heritage conservation districts and identified cultural heritage landscapes
- Conduct a county-wide Cultural Heritage Mapping study
- Present workshops and lectures for interested citizens on preserving and restoring heritage properties and privately held heritage collections that includes information on accessing grant programs for this type of private restoration work

Focusing Commercial Development in Downtown Areas

- Establish Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) in identified areas (ss. 28, Planning Act)
- Investigate the use of a Development Permit System (DPS) to streamline the development process (ss. 70 2(5) Ontario Regulation 608/06)
- Ensure that Official Plan and Zoning By-Law policies allow for mixed land use in downtown areas to promote residential density to support commercial development
- Establish and promote the use of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) for downtown redevelopment (s. 204 of the Municipal Act)

Landscapes

- Preserve agricultural land – protecting it from new development – through the use of appropriate land use designations in Official Plans
- Foster closer working relationships between heritage organizations, conservation authorities and environmental action groups focusing on common goals of preserving the quality of life in Huron County

TARGETS

- All Huron County schools have undertaken the schoolyard planting project

INDICATORS

- # of schools who have undertaken the schoolyard planting project

LC2. Foster Compact Liveable Communities That Address Community Needs

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Promote resident participation in creating liveable communities by establishing a Steering Committee to advise and oversee liveable community initiatives
- Use land and infrastructure efficiently with an emphasis on environmental protection, intensification, redevelopment and infill opportunities, by way of:
 - Site Plan Control (ss. 41(4) Planning Act)
 - Subdivision Approval Criteria (ss. 51(24) and (25) of the Planning Act)
 - Allowing for secondary units
 - Official Plan policies and Zoning By-Laws

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Promote and encourage communities that are walkable by way of:
 - Site Plan Control (ss. 41(4) Planning Act)
 - Establishing minimum and maximum heights/density of development in by-laws (ss. 34(3) Planning Act)
 - Subdivision Approval Criteria (ss. 51(24) and (25) of the Planning Act)
- Develop communities that have a mix of uses, housing types and prices, and accommodate anticipated growth through appropriate Official Plan policies and Zoning By-Laws
- Build capacity for and promote the planning of age-friendly environments
- Connect land use planning with injury prevention measures
- Calculate and track Huron County's ecological footprint. Identify areas where it can be reduced significantly and institute programs to achieve these reductions.

TARGETS

- Growth in Huron County will be accommodated within existing urban boundaries
- Huron County's Ecological Footprint is reduced from the Canadian average (7.6 ha / person) by 25%

INDICATORS

- Pattern of population growth
- Ecological Footprint

LC3. Create Long-Term Infrastructure Plans that Support Appropriate Services, Facilities and Amenities for Liveable Communities

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Ensure safe drinking water supplies
- Work with MOE to ensure that water withdrawals are within permitted levels
- Promote naturalized landscaping with minimal turf grass (reduces water and energy consumption) through:
 - Site Plan Control (ss. 41(4) Planning Act)
 - Subdivision Approval Criteria (ss. 51(24) and (25) of the Planning Act)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Cultivate an integrated approach to land use, infrastructure and transportation planning
- Educate, promote, encourage, and permit best management practices for stormwater management (SWM) by:
 - Investigating the use of a Green Roof By-Law
 - Providing subsidies and other financial incentives to encourage the use of grey water collection systems
 - Requiring best practices in SWM through Site Plan Control (ss. 41(4) Planning Act) and Subdivision Approval Criteria (. 51(24) and (25) of the Planning Act)
- Update infrastructure as needed, emphasizing the use of sustainable design options and material when feasible

TARGETS

- Infrastructure meets community needs in a sustainable manner

INDICATORS

- Water quality indicators as listed in NE3

LC4 Create a Multi-Modal Transportation Network Which Strongly Supports Active Transportation

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Priority Project: Enhance opportunities for active transportation in Huron County (see page 18)

- Review current sidewalk policies at the local municipal level and update the current sidewalk inventory database
- Reduce parking requirements and require bike racks in commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities through Official Plan policies and Zoning By-Laws

See also actions under TR1

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Undertake, in partnership with local municipalities, an Active Transportation and Trails Master Plan that could include:
 - Developing cycling routes along major roads and routes between settlements
 - Developing a comprehensive trail network, focusing on connectivity and accessibility (e.g. for walking, cycling, cross-country skiing)
 - Enhancing the accessibility and walkability of communities through wide barrier-free sidewalks on both sides of the street
 - Providing secure bicycle facilities at all municipal and institutional destinations
 - Introducing bike racks on transit vehicles to enhance intermodal connectivity
 - Ensuring that alternative transportation links between communities are accessible to all residents

TARGETS

- Improved access to and use of active transportation alternatives (walking, biking, etc)

INDICATORS

- % of residents within 1 km of a dedicated biking facility
- % of children within walking distance to school (1.6 km for primary, 4.8 km for High School)
- Average commuter distance (km) per year

LC5. Mitigate the Impacts of Big Box Development

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Require a high standard of building site design for future big box development addressing the needs of community

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Through Site Plan Control (ss. 41(4) Planning Act), Zoning By-Laws and Official Plan policies:
 - Require big box development to be integrated and connected to existing communities by active transportation paths
 - Require big box development to utilize naturalized landscaping and greenspace

TARGETS

-

INDICATORS

-

Community and Social Well-Being

POPULATION

Huron County will sustain a moderate population growth with increased ethnic diversity by retaining current residents, welcoming new residents, and developing opportunities for youth, families and seniors.

POP1. Support a Moderate and Sustainable Population Growth with Increased Ethnic Diversity

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Distribute the Huron County Population Strategy/Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) across the County
- Produce a brief analysis overview of Huron County demographics (including future trends) from the LIP
- Promote Huron County as a destination for new immigrants
- Identify patterns of growth in Huron County (where people are moving to)
- Implement the recommendations of the LIP
- Create a welcoming service for new residents

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Provide assistance for new immigrants to establish businesses. Encourage businesses that are oriented towards the culture of new immigrants (e.g. art, food, clothing, literature)
- Ensure municipal planning accommodates population growth within existing urban areas and mminimizes sprawl

TARGETS

- Huron County is a culturally, ethnically, socially, and religiously diverse community
- Growth in Huron County will be accommodated within existing settlement areas

INDICATORS

- Social, religious, cultural, ethnic diversity measured through census data
- # of new immigrants & new comers to Huron County
- Pattern of population growth (including birthrate within Huron)

POP2. Market and Promote Huron County as a Great Place To Live and Vacation

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Priority Project:** Make Huron Home (see page 14)
- Develop a strategy to communicate the quality of life in Huron (relaxed, safe, affordable, little traffic, friendly people, small communities) and actively promote the positive attributes of living and working in Huron
 - Create a strong, inclusive community identity based on what we are - "this is Huron"
 - Promote rural and small town lifestyle and employment opportunities to seasonal residents and visitors – entice people to move here
 - Creatively market all entertainment options (e.g. live music, trails, parks, fishing, theatre, camping, etc.)
 - Partner with Huron Tourism Association to Make Huron County a destination of choice for visitors
 - Foster a welcoming and culturally sensitive community (e.g. increase opportunities for children to experience ethnic diversity through school projects, curricula, and field trips)
 - Continue to celebrate local First Nations history, culture, and communities
 - Encourage inclusion of cultural and ethnic diversity in all aspects of cultural programming. Recognize that audiences and consumers are interested in experiencing and learning about cultures and traditions outside their own

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Ensure that a variety of housing options exist, including affordable housing options suitable for youth, young families, and singles
- Continue to develop a complete network of broadband/IT infrastructure across the County

See also actions under CN1

POP2. Market and Promote Huron County as a Great Place To Live and Vacation

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Education and Awareness

- Increase awareness about the principles and actions within the Local Immigration Partnership strategy to Huron County residents through social media/ad campaign
 - Encourage, promote, and celebrate diversity through public education and outreach programs (e.g. TV, newspaper, radio) and community events (e.g. Cultural Festivals, Food from around the world weeks, etc.)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

TARGETS

- Huron County is a culturally, ethnically, socially, and religiously diverse community
- Target message to the market – identify specific markets (i.e. new immigrants, young Huron residents to return, etc.)
- Increase retention and return rate.

INDICATORS

- # of new residents in Huron County (and previous geographical location)
- # of visitors/tourists to Huron County per year
- birthrate within Huron County
- # of new residents in Huron County (and previous geographical location)
- Retention of new residents to Huron County

POP3. Foster And Enhance Opportunities for all Demographics (Youth, Families, and Seniors)

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Youth

- Conduct research on the number of youth leaving Huron County and their primary reasons for doing so
- Develop a Youth Retention and Return Strategy which could include:
 - Demonstrating the opportunities that exist in Huron (agriculture, manufacturing, and cultural industries) to youth;
 - Networking with universities and potential employers to establish career related co-op internships, apprenticeship, mentoring programs, and jobs for youth and graduates (**see EC2 and CN3**)
 - Marketing employment opportunities directly to Huron's youth (message to youth needs to ensure that “Retention” includes “leaving and returning”)

Seniors

- Plan for the needs of seniors, including accessibility, affordable housing, aging at home, and health care

Youth

- Hold an annual Youth Summit on pressing issues (e.g. climate change) with local experts. Ask youth to develop responses and integrate them in the municipal planning processes (
- Provide safe places in each community for youth to hang out
- Increase number of free community events in Huron County (e.g. free skating, community picnics, concerts on the beach, etc.)

TARGETS

- Asset/immigration increase by 50%
- Maximize local employment in high end jobs
- All ages & incomes visible in Core areas of settlement areas
- Huron County is an age friendly communities

INDICATORS

- Net out-migration of youth (<24 years)
- # of youth employed locally
- Median income of in Huron County compared to other rural counties
- # of age friendly communities (all demographics)

Community and Social Well-Being

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Huron County residents value and support community organizations and services which promote culture, diversity, recreation, education, entertainment, affordable housing and health

CN1. Support and Build Arts, Culture, and Heritage Programs to Inspire and Foster Creative Energy in Huron County

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Priority Project: Develop an arts and culture resource hub to support the development of arts, culture, and heritage efforts in Huron County (see page 16).

- Market all arts, cultural and heritage opportunities (e.g. County festivals, events, businesses, and activities) widely (e.g. to GTA media, U.S. border state media, online), and showcase them as "uniquely Huron"
- Create one central website that contains information and links to all arts, culture, and heritage resources in the County (all social media)
- Explore the feasibility of having the Huron County Museum act as an administrative umbrella organization for some of the smaller heritage assets and museums in the County
- Cultural mapping/time mapping of cultural events
- Prepare a municipal cultural plan that identifies upper and lower tier responsibilities i.e. include cultural and heritage assets in Official Plan, zoning, and other bylaws as necessary
- Explore ways to ensure that arts, culture, and heritage and their local creators and contributors are appreciated and supported as cornerstones of the community's health, vitality and economic prosperity
- Encourage and enhance entrepreneurial opportunities for arts stakeholders i.e. establish business start-up and support for artists
- Ensure that youth have ample opportunity to participate in affordable artistic expression and cultural heritage activities (drama, visual arts, dance)
- Conduct a survey with visitors to Huron County to identify why they are attending arts, culture and heritage events and programs, and what more they would like to see

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Continue to support and expand on immediate actions

TARGETS

- Huron County has a vibrant and accessible arts community
- Increased number of visitors to art, culture and heritage programs
- Increase opportunities for cultural and creative industries

INDICATORS

- Number of private and public art spaces (galleries, open air exhibits), culture and heritage programs
- Number of visitors to art, culture and heritage programs
- # of diverse arts programs in Huron County
- Quality & quantity of media coverage

CN2. Ensure Huron County is Affordable and Accessible for All Residents

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Priority Project:** Develop a lens of sustainability (see page 31)
- Expand upon free or low-cost Huron County community events and activities (e.g. cultural events, skating, etc.)
 - Create accessibility awards for the most accessible business or best retrofit. Encourage public and private community facilities to carry out accessibility upgrades (ramps, electrically operated doors, lifts, etc.).
 - Increase awareness of hidden homelessness across Huron County
 - Continue expanding the Bridges out of Poverty program in Huron County
 - Inventory of free/low cost events

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Increase the range of affordable and attainable housing types and a mix of rental ownership options in accessible locations and ensure that Huron County addresses and plans for the housing needs of its community
- Link transportation provision with organization of events and activities
- Promote mixed use live-work environments with affordable housing
- Maintain and increase capacity of current housing supports for youth
- Develop transitional housing supports for men and families in Huron County

TARGETS

- Reduce the number of individuals and families living with low-income
- Number of housing units/ beds meets the demand of Huron County Community
- Decreased use of emergency shelters through transition to affordable housing
- All new public buildings will be compliant with the OCD Act

INDICATORS

- Diversity of housing options in Huron County
- Number of public facilities that are accessible
- Statistics around poverty in Huron County

CN3. Encourage, Support and Ensure that Opportunities for Meaningful Higher Learning Experiences Exist in Huron County

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Assess current job markets and skill needs of Huron County residents to add/modify/adapt training and education programs as needed
- Increase co-ordination, communication and alignment among the educational opportunities in Huron County so that all groups are aware of, supporting, and promoting each other's initiatives
- Promote and encourage the provision of post-secondary educational courses locally that meet community needs and increase job opportunities (e.g. green jobs, new businesses, skills for 21st century opportunities)
- Support and invest in local schools
- Capitalize on the rich intellectual capital in Huron County by connecting community leaders with high schools to profile diverse pathways through education and employment

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Increase availability of high speed internet in major population centres including libraries for on-line learning
- Hold an annual 'Education Fair' to advertise available jobs in Huron County and to celebrate success
- Foster the partnerships between school boards on some initiatives (i.e. youth summit)
- Establish permanent, post-secondary and specialized educational programs with full diploma or degree (e.g. explore satellite campuses for colleges and universities located within Huron County)
- Explore innovative ways to avoid school closures
- Develop educational opportunities that foster life-long learning (i.e. ongoing learning for farmer, new strategies for changing markets or niche agriculture groups)

TARGETS

- All Huron County residents are appropriately trained for 21st century jobs
- High school graduation rate at 100% (currently below 90%)

INDICATORS

- Education completion/ graduation rates: high school, post-secondary diploma and degree programs, post-secondary education courses, apprenticeship programs
- Diversity of educational opportunities in Huron County (# of high schools, post-secondary diploma and degree programs, adult education courses,

CN3. Encourage, Support and Ensure that Opportunities for Meaningful Higher Learning Experiences Exist in Huron County

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

apprenticeship programs, environmental education programs etc.)

CN4. Foster Pride, Sense of Community, and Support in Huron County

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Build community spirit and neighbourhood connections through annual picnics and community and school gardens
- Promote neighbourhood watch programs in Huron County communities

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Maintain a unique sense of place in the smaller villages and towns of Huron County, but recognize common interests moving towards a sustainable future
- Build stronger connections between police and the community to ensure Huron County communities are safe places to live and grow
- Support and recognize community volunteers by offering leadership and volunteer opportunities within our community and donating time and money to support community organizations

TARGETS

- All Huron County residents are proud to call Huron County home

INDICATORS

- Number of volunteers
- Attendance at community and neighbourhood events

Community and Social Well-Being

HEALTHY ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

**Huron County residents live active, healthy lifestyles
with access to wellness services for mind and body**

HAC1. Promote Active and Healthy Lifestyles to Huron County Residents

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Healthy Eating

- Develop a Food Charter considering production, processing, distribution, increasing access to healthy foods and consumption
- Expand Community Food Advisors and Community Kitchen Program
- Support programs that increase awareness around acquiring and preparing healthy foods (see AG3)

Recreation

- Use Community Mapping to inventory existing physical activity programs and resources

Education and Awareness

- Explore current behaviour and demand in recreational activities, and promote behaviour change to adopt more physical activity practices in all age groups (e.g. walking to school, walking and cycling clubs)
- Increase awareness and understanding of how community design and lifestyle are connected to rural health issues (e.g. obesity, cardiovascular disease)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Recreation

- Maintain a full range of playing fields, parks, arenas, and recreation complexes (e.g. for high level training in track, cycling, gymnastics, martial arts, etc.)
- Ensure accessible trails with linkages between communities and public access points (e.g. to rivers and shorelines) maintained throughout the year
- Foster community engagement of all ages in planning initiatives, including cultural, social, recreational and business initiatives
- Foster sustainable community design (see LC2)
- Support the development of workplace recreation policies

Healthy Eating

- Expand model of community gardens through building partnerships and examining land-use bylaws
- Explore best practices for improving access to local foods (e.g. Local Food Hubs)
- Conduct community mapping to identify priority areas for improved food access
- Encourage organizations and businesses to adopt healthy food policies and buy local food
- Advocate for stronger legislation around accessibility of unhealthy foods

TARGETS

- Huron County has recreational opportunities and facilities that meet the needs of the community, as defined by the community
- People in Huron County are eating healthier foods

INDICATORS

- # of people / 1000 population participating in recreational activities
- # of people participating in healthy food classes, courses, and program
- Cost of healthy eating

HAC2. Strongly Support Active Transportation in Our Communities

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Establish a walking/cycling education and outreach campaign that may include:
 - Developing Pedestrian and Cycling Charters for the County of Huron in partnership with local municipalities
 - Coordinating a walking school bus for children in the towns and villages
 - Adopting an Active and Safe Routes to School program
 - Implementing a Bicycle Friendly Community designation program

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Foster a community-based bike cooperative to refurbish donated bikes for families in need and for private sale
- Undertake, in partnership with local municipalities, an Active Transportation and Trails Master Plan (see LC4)
- Prepare and hold an Active Transportation and Health Promotion Workshop

TARGETS

- Increased participation of Huron County residents in non-fossil fuelled modes of transport (bike, walk)

INDICATORS

- Kms of bike paths, recreation trails, bike lanes per capita

HAC3. Ensure Huron County Residents Have Access to Excellent Health and Wellness Services to Support Healthy Bodies, Minds, and Communities

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Continue community support to maintain and enhance local hospitals and clinics
- Assess the needs for additional in-school breakfast programs
- Establish and promote LGBTQ support services for youth and adults
- Support no-smoking zone policies and by-laws in workplaces, recreational fields, and Huron County buildings
- Build partnerships among agencies delivering community mental health supports and programs to identify strategies to address current challenges

Recreation

- Develop a Community Physical Activity Advisor Program
- Ensure public access to Lake Huron, the network of walking trails, rivers etc.

Education and Awareness

- Design and implement a public education and outreach campaign to increase community awareness of existing support services in Huron County (e.g. recreation, healthy cooking classes, etc.)
- Continue to develop and implement public education and outreach campaigns regarding preventable injuries in various age groups

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Connect community health groups and service providers in specific areas to discuss overlap and partnership opportunities to achieve common goals (e.g. a community approach to alcohol and substance abuse, tobacco use and exposure, mental health, etc.)
- Identify and implement strategies to reduce alcohol and substance misuse in youth (including policies around alcohol and sporting events, education and awareness, etc.)
- Support a comprehensive strategy to address the orphan patient list including:
 - Attracting and retaining health care professionals
 - Marketing health care professions to youth
 - Providing local health care training

Recreation

- Build capacity and partnerships with existing facilities, organizations and programs to increase access to and participation in recreation opportunities (e.g. after hours)
- Create a County-wide system of access to and promotion of recreation subsidies

TARGETS

- Medical services are on a par with similar jurisdictions regarding access to doctors, wait times for medical procedures, long term care beds etc
- All Huron County residents have access to the health and recreation services and programs that they need

INDICATORS

- # of people using support programs (collected by individual programs)
- Injury and mortality rates (e.g. emergency room visits)
- Total # of physicians (new and existing) per 1000 people
- # of hospital beds, long-term care beds,
- Emergency response time, # of EMS providers per 1000 people
- Available recreation opportunities (community centres, acres of parkland per person, recreation trail miles)
- Public access sites on lakes and rivers

Community and Social Well-Being

TRANSPORTATION

Huron County will have a transportation network, emphasizing active transportation and providing multi-modal options, such as walking, cycling, roads, rail, water, and air transit that meet the needs of the entire community.

TR1. Develop an Accessible, Efficient, Integrated, Multi-Modal Transportation Network

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Priority Project: Use the Transportation Demand Management study recommendations to pursue alternative opportunities for getting people around in Huron (see page 20)

- Establish a Transportation Committee to take the lead on addressing Huron County’s transportation challenges in a comprehensive manner. Could include an exploration of:
 - Best practices in other rural communities
 - Potential funding sources to enhance the existing bus services provided by privately operated companies (between urban centres in County)
 - Potential partnerships to create a shuttle service for schools to provide transportation to and from after school activities

Public Transportation

- Build partnerships among existing transportation providers to maximize facility/vehicle use and to explore opportunities to expand public transportation services throughout Huron County

TARGETS

- Increase non-fossil fuelled modes of transport (bike, walk)
- Increase public transit ridership by 30%
- Special need transport services (e.g. for medical needs, disabled, seniors and youth/low income families) are available on demand at all times

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Public Transportation

- Expand and refine the Abouttown service schedule
- Explore the use of school buses outside of school hours as additional public transportation vehicles
- Pilot a Summer Shuttle Service that provides hop-on-hop-off service linking key destinations throughout Huron County (i.e. downtown centres, local community health services, grocery stores, etc)

Transportation Network

- Explore new opportunities associated with established airports, harbours and railways in Huron County

Active Transportation

- Undertake, in partnership with local municipalities, an Active Transportation and Trails Master Plan (**see LC4**)

INDICATORS

- Modal split (cars, bikes, buses)
- Kms of roads/bike paths/transit routes/sidewalks per capita
- Total public transit ridership
- Availability and use of special transport for medical needs, disabled, seniors and youth/low income families

TR2. Ensure Huron County’s Municipal Transportation System is Environmentally and Economically Responsible

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Education and Awareness

- Establish and implement an anti-idling campaign to reduce vehicle idling

Carpooling

- Develop a “carpool to work day” twice a year at Municipal and County Offices
- Identify major employers and members of the community to work with to invest in and implement potential vanpool and carpooling opportunities
- Implement carpool and vanpool parking lots at key locations throughout the County (e.g. offices, educational facilities) using additional signage or pavement markings

TARGETS

-

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Road Infrastructure

- Consider the triple bottom line for major infrastructure projects and infrastructure maintenance
- Consider the economic benefits and environmental goals when determining support and enhancement of regional airports, rail and roads
- Minimize the environmental impact of road maintenance by optimizing the use of road salt and calcium chloride
- Establish policies for the use of recycled paving material and other sustainable infrastructure practices
- Explore the use of windbreaks along roads to reduce snow drifting and contribute natural habitat

INDICATORS

- Average commuter distance (km) per year

Economic Security

ECONOMY

The Huron County economy will continue to provide economic security and opportunity for its residents through diversification, business retention, local provision, education and training opportunities.

EC1. Ensure a Diversity of Economic Opportunities Within Huron County to Enhance Economic Security

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Support the initiatives outlined in the Economic Blueprint 2011
- Continue to market Huron's tourism strengths and promote tourism development opportunities (see POP2)
- Support the development of a long-term marketing, promotion, and retention campaign recognizing local and global economic factors
- Support market development for local business using other businesses in Huron
- To attract new business, the perception that Huron is NOT open for business must change through mentorship, customer service training, etc.
- Develop industries that youth express interest in to aid in youth retention.

Green Business

- Develop policies and programs to attract Green Business and advertise Huron county as a place for Green Business
- Celebrate Green Business through media (newspaper inserts, trade publications)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Encourage an entrepreneurial spirit in youth
- Explore niche development opportunities within the five pillars of Huron's economy: agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, culture/creative economy, and retail
- Target new investors to take advantage of infrastructure capacity (e.g. Food processing)
- Promote diversification of agriculture towards more value added products (see AG2)
- Explore potential for conference facilities (using green technology) within Huron County
- Investigate hiring a project manager for new business attraction

TARGETS

- Increased diversity of businesses and employment, especially in sustainable economic activities
- Revenue from new jobs created represent an XX% increase from 2010 levels

INDICATORS

- Number and type of new businesses started each year
- Number of new green businesses
- Number of jobs created (and net revenue generated) in agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and culture
- Number of businesses that adopt sustainable business practices
- Percentage of diversification of agriculture (based on benchmark)

EC2. Provide Local Education and Training Opportunities Which Will Support the Diverse Huron County Economy

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Local Education and Training Opportunities

- Develop a workforce development strategy to support workforce development training (part of the 4 County Labour Board)
- Investigate the possibility of establishing a trade school, industrial college, and e-learning course opportunities (Network Huron)
- Continue partnering with local school boards to offer training programs that increase awareness of local opportunities and equip youth to work in businesses Huron County is attracting (pre and post high school) (High Skills Major) i.e. sponsorship of science fairs in Huron or in the eco-schools program

- Expand and tailor the course offerings of Lake Huron Learning Collaborative
- Find ways to connect with the rich intellectual capital in the area, through developing a platform for an exchange with our highly-trained residents (e.g. professors living in the region)

See also actions under CN3

TARGETS

- All Huron County residents are appropriately trained for 21st Century jobs (including green business, etc.)
- Increased youth retention rate and decrease in out-migration of youth

INDICATORS

- Diversity of education and training opportunities in Huron County (trade schools, adult courses, apprenticeship programs, diploma and degree programs, etc.)
- Level of education in population (number of high school grads; trade school grads).

EC2. Provide Local Education and Training Opportunities Which Will Support the Diverse Huron County Economy

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Number of schools in the eco-school program
- Youth retention rates; out-migration rates

EC3. Strive to Create a Huron County Economy That Supports the Triple Bottom Line and Ensures the Best Use of Financial, Social, and Natural Resources

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and distribute a sustainable business best practice guide (based on the HMA sustainable business toolkit) • Promote the adoption of sustainability principles by local businesses • Develop an annual “Best Environmental Practices Award” recognition program for innovative businesses (across sectors & groups) • Promote cooperative ventures where single investors have not acted on opportunities alone • Educate and inform businesses of appropriate waste disposal methods and encourage waste reduction, reuse, and recycling • Develop criteria (found from other sources) for a “Sustainable Huron” business, if a business meets the criteria, they can use the logo • Create jobs that offer a safe, secure, and pleasant work environment that pay well enough to afford the cost of living in Huron County. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustained harvest forestry as part of the agricultural economy • Proactively support natural heritage features in the market economy (carbon market, real estate values) • Become a “dark-night skies” community (e.g. reduce light pollution at night) |
|---|---|

TARGETS

- At least three “Best Environmental Practice Awards” will be given out each year

INDICATORS

- Number of “Best Environmental Practice Awards” given out each year
- Number of companies that are certified under the “Sustainable Huron” program
- Average wage in Huron County relative to the cost of living in Huron

EC4. Assist with the Retention and Expansion of Local Businesses

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Priority Project: Encourage BR&E programs and implement effective strategies (including succession planning) (see page 25)

- Develop an online "Huron County Marketplace" to link local businesses and residents
- Explore the feasibility of creating an economic development division within the County’s Planning and Development Department
 - Conduct a scan at other similar municipalities to see how they are organized and what might work in Huron County
- Showcase Huron County at trade fairs
- Increase the visibility of the Huron Small Business Centre and the Huron Business Development Corporation
- Support and promote shop local campaigns and source goods and services

- Investigate and promote new economic opportunities
- Explore more permissive home business and industry policies
- Ensure technical support is available for new businesses to adapt to new regulations and opportunities

See also actions under DT1

EC4. Assist with the Retention and Expansion of Local Businesses

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- locally
- Establish high speed internet access throughout Huron County

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

TARGETS	INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenues from new and existing businesses represent an XX% increase from 2010 levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue of existing and local businesses Number and type of businesses retained/Number and type of businesses that have closed down Number of homes accessible to high speed internet

EC5. Promote Tourism and Enhance Sustainable Tourism Practices In Huron County

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Continue to promote Huron County as a great place to live and vacation (**POP2**)

Sustainable Tourism

- Establish locally developed standards for tourist facilities, with local inspection to maintain standards and a 'seal of approval' that can be displayed on local tourist facilities
- Encourage golf courses to become Audubon certified
- Establish a Green Festivals and Meetings Standard
- Encourage the Regional Tourism Organization to develop a sustainable tourism strategy
- Develop eco-tourism and agri-tourism products in Huron (product development)
- Economic Ambassadors – getting schools to visit the area (education/awareness)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Build capacity for sustainable tourism by:
 - Exploring best practices in sustainable tourism
 - Implementing sector based initiatives
 - Promoting partnerships with other destinations
 - Identifying and supporting organizations that are able to design and implement a sustainable tourism strategy
 - Promoting sustainable tourism practices to operators and providing them with the necessary tools to implement sustainable practices
- Investigate potential for a visitor eco-tax, i.e. for beach or trail users, that could be used to generate revenues for natural areas protection and beach preservation (**see NE1 and NE2**)
- Develop "experiential" packages that demonstrate the wide variety of tourism offerings in Huron County that are sustainable and support local livelihoods

TARGETS	INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of tourists and tourism revenue XX number of sustainable tourism strategies developed and implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of visitors to locally designated tourist sites Number of B&B / hotel rooms let per year # of sustainable tourism strategies # of partnerships across tourism destinations in sustainable tourism

Economic Security

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Huron County will have a strong and diversified agricultural industry, providing food to the local community and beyond using environmental best practices

AG1. Strengthen Huron County's Agriculture Industry

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Priority Project: Engage and embrace the role of youth in entrepreneurship, starting with agriculture (see page 29).

Inventory of our Agricultural Context

- Conduct an inventory of the existing agricultural context in Huron County (# farms, hectares, average farm size, Greenhouses, farm income by commodity, etc.)

Capacity Building

- Hold a strategic planning session with local agricultural organizations (e.g. Farm to Table Opportunities Project) to identify and address issues that are relevant to the region and overlap between organizations
- Create an Agricultural Coordinator position at the County level to connect and work with all municipalities, organizations, and stakeholders – this person should act as a field rep that would cover on-farm, stewardship, tourism, etc. issues (based on the former OMAF position).
- Explore the creation of an Agriculture Committee in the County, working with the Huron County Federation of Agriculture, National Farmers' Union, Huron County Christian Farmers and commodity-based groups (i.e. Dairy farmers), to ensure agricultural groups continue to provide strong leadership for the industry and County

Education and Awareness

- Create a web-based list of agricultural opportunities (2010 Huron Farm Guide) – and promote to local community as well as tourists

TARGETS

- Agriculture as an economic activity in Huron County is maintained and enhanced
- High value added products represent XX% of total agricultural product in County
- Increase in % of income from high value products
- Maintain 100% of agricultural land in Huron County

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Create partnerships and introduce a successful internship program with Canada's agriculturally focused universities, including University of Guelph and Queens
- Enhance the agricultural community's involvement in planning – e.g. through an information mechanism which provides information about regulatory programs, policies or programs of interest
- Ensure that all policies and land use plans are strictly adhered to regarding protection of prime agricultural lands from non-farm uses
- Promote innovative practices such as land sharing and land leasing

Farm Succession Planning

- Promote and provide resources for farm succession planning
- Engage and embrace the role of youth in Huron County's agriculture
- Develop a local agricultural leadership program which will promote careers in agriculture, and allow youth to identify their own entrepreneurial endeavours

INDICATORS

- Total # of and average hectares of farms
- Farm income by commodity
- Rate of conversion of farmland to other uses

AG2. Support a Diversified Agriculture Sector

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Support the development, operation, and expansion of agricultural co-operatives and community based economies
- Explore the production of various niche markets to tap into new opportunities and existing markets (not limited to the religious or production type - crops, poultry, livestock, aquaculture, etc.)
- Continue explorations into potential for a viticulture industry
- Encourage ongoing learning and continuing education amongst Huron County Farmers

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Ensure technical support is available for agricultural businesses in adapting to new regulations and acting on opportunities
- Create a targeted marketing plan to attract various markets to Huron specifically for agriculture

AG2. Support a Diversified Agriculture Sector

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Agri-business incubator (Green Jobs Strategy) has a document on developing a sustainable business incubator (3 year process from incubation – starting businesses)
- Investigate partnering and collaborating on ventures (HMA, culinary tourism, etc.)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

TARGETS	INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High value added products represent XX% of total agricultural product in County by 2030 • Increase in % of income from high value products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm income by commodity • Total Greenhouse Area (square metres) • Number of commodities produced and the percentage of total based on a benchmark

AG3. Continue to Build Support and Momentum for Local Food in Huron County Communities and Neighbouring Regions

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Priority Project: Increase the profile of local food as a means to diversify and enhance the local farm economy, tourism and promote healthy eating (see page 27).

Building Support

- Explore institutional buying from local sources
- Explore value-added production to increase restaurant and institutional buyers
- Work with Huron-Perth Farm to Table to investigate and develop new partnerships that will support the development of a regional food distribution system (e.g. Bruce, Perth, Grey Counties)
- Support local food processing
- Product development for agri-tourism i.e. market-ready farm-gates (see EC5)

Education and Awareness

- Implement a public education and outreach campaign that 1) promotes the importance and benefits of local food; 2) raises awareness of the range of products available in Huron County; and 3) markets Huron County as a Food Basket to other communities. Initiatives could include
 - “Grown in Huron” logos and brand promoted in local stores and beyond
 - Internet-based resources and social media to promote local food
 - Marketing of agriculture to tourists/agri-tourism through the Ontario’s West Coast Initiative
 - Meetings and events with Huron County businesses and organizations

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

Access to Healthy Food

- Build capacity and partnerships to link producers and consumers
- Develop a community marketing and leadership program to encourage healthy, local food consumption
 - Three Stage (perhaps following further market ready product development)
 - media tour – OFAC & GFO
 - buyer tour (showcase)
 - farm open house (tourism – consumer) – “Breakfast on the Farm”

Education and Awareness

- Training for farmer to become more market ready (program or networking group to share best practices)

TARGETS	INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Huron County residents have access to affordable local healthy food options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of direct-market sales • Volume of local processing • Number of farmers supplying food distribution

AG3. Continue to Build Support and Momentum for Local Food in Huron County Communities and Neighbouring Regions

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- % of local food used in municipal institutions and restaurant

AG4. Promote and Market the Use of Environmental Best Practices in the Agricultural Industry

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness and profile of Environmental Management Farm Plans (EMFP) and Nutrient Management Plans (NMP)s • Support sustainable agricultural practices on Huron County farms • Promote land preservation and stewardship best practices, (e.g. use of white sheets, no irrigation, no tilling, use of companion plants, drainage ponds to filter runoff, hedgerows etc.) • Celebrate successes achieved through the Environmental Farm Plans program and Huron Clean Water project • Use the Agricultural Coordinator position to investigate and report back current research implementation opportunities (partnering universities/colleges for the development and other groups that are doing research, such as AAC and OFA’s bio-mass research project. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an agricultural strategy that looks at the changes in trends for farming – including climate change and the rising cost of oil • Investigate and pursue appropriate opportunities for on-farm energy generation and alternative energy programs and policies that are applicable to agriculture • Develop viticulture with sustainable best practices • Promote the use/need of ecological goods and services payments for farmers (i.e. PEGS program) • Reducing the carbon and water footprint of agriculture in Huron County |
|---|---|

TARGETS

- All Huron County farms will have developed Environmental Farm Plans
- X% of Huron County farms are engaged in sustainable agricultural practices by 2030

INDICATORS

- Number of Environmental Farm Plans in Huron County; % increase in Plans over time
- # of farms participating in organic farming, manure management, wildlife habitat management etc.
- # of environmental farm plans and nutrient management plans in Huron County; % increase in plans over time
- # of farms participating in water, manure, pesticide, wildlife and habitat management
- Compare carbon and water footprints to previous benchmark

Economic Security

DOWNTOWNS

The five downtowns in Huron County will be active and healthy centres of commerce, government and culture, capitalizing on historic character, locally-owned businesses, and people-friendly spaces

DT1. Develop a County-Wide Downtown Strategy that Builds on Current Initiatives and Can be Adopted and Implemented by all Municipalities In Towns and Villages

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Priority Project:** Continue to encourage Business Retention and Expansion programs and implement effective strategies; and share best practices among towns and villages to ensure progress and development (see page 25)
- Establish a Downtown Coordinator position to facilitate County-wide strategic initiatives
 - Establish Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) in identified areas and make use of incentive programs (e.g. Facade Improvement Grant Program, Fee Grant Equivalent Program, Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program, Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program)
 - Investigate the use of a Development Permit System (DPS) to streamline the development process
 - Reduce progressive municipal taxes for unused buildings – this could aid in re-development

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Establish and promote the use of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) for downtown redevelopment
- Develop Urban Design Guidelines for downtown districts, especially Heritage Conservation Districts
- Ensure that Official Plan and Zoning By-Law policies allow for mixed land use in downtown areas to promote residential density to support commercial development where suitable
- Investigate the designation of heritage properties and districts (Part IV or Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act) - **see LC1**

See also actions under EC4

TARGETS

- Huron County attracts and retains high end businesses, including sustainable businesses

INDICATORS

- Number of businesses (including sustainable businesses)
- # of people employed
- Vacancy rates for downtowns relative to a benchmark

DT2. Create Accessible, Aesthetically Pleasing, People-Friendly Spaces Within Our Downtowns

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Institute a public art fund from development taxes or in lieu of dedicated parkland to enhance public spaces in the downtown for events, gatherings, markets, etc
- Design sidewalks to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs
- Conduct a County-wide Wayfinding and Signage Study (e.g. business identification) and implement a coordinated signage system and associated maps for visitors and residents
- Create an index and map of all businesses and services located in downtown areas
- Develop Urban Design Guidelines for downtown districts that ensure new development complements adjacent heritage properties (and promote the benefits of the Urban Design Guidelines to owners and potential buyers)
- Create opportunities for local artists to showcase their art (feature a changing art space to illustrate the talents of Huron's artists)

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Provide pedestrian amenities and visually interesting streetscapes, including street furniture, sidewalk materials, native shade tree species, pedestrian-scale lighting, flowerboxes, banners and public art
- Promote adaptive reuse of heritage buildings by developing Official Plan policies and zoning regulations that maintain the historic character of the older buildings and make use of the second floors (**see LC1**)
- Site Plan Control
- Install bike racks and provide bike lanes, infrastructure and amenities (**see LC4**)
- Develop and apply policies to augment downtown green space where feasible
- Turn derelict, non-historical building and vacant lands into green space
- Develop Streetscape Plans for main streets and commercial districts

DT2. Create Accessible, Aesthetically Pleasing, People-Friendly Spaces Within Our Downtowns

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

TARGETS

- Green space will occupy **XX%** of downtown areas
- Heritage buildings are conserved and are used as part of the business community

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

INDICATORS

- % green space in the downtown

DT3. Foster the Development of Downtowns as Healthy Centres of Commerce, Government, and Culture, Where People Will Want to Live, Shop and Work

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

- Encourage, promote, support, and expand downtown farmers and flea markets by:
 - conducting a SWOT analysis of existing markets;
 - coordinating with local partners, such as Buy Local, Buy Fresh, Taste of Huron, and Savour Stratford Perth County, to add reach and build capacity
- Develop and promote a brand/logo which identifies businesses and products as local or “Made in Huron”
- Promote the benefits of shopping locally and the provision and sale of locally produced goods
- Conduct a gap analysis to identify the retail and service needs of the community and ensure they are met (i.e. day care, drycleaners, grocery stores, post office)
- Promote the importance of civic engagement for business owners through BIAs, Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Officers
- Implement downtown customer service programs
- Conduct a survey to understand the demographic profiling of downtown visitors

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Focus commercial and public service development in downtown areas
- Support succession planning initiatives for local businesses and retention and expansion policies
- Encourage events and activities in the downtown that attract people (i.e. balance of daytime and night time events and
- Explore residential opportunities downtown by:
 - allowing for mixed-use development;
 - allowing for secondary suites; and
 - encouraging infill, redevelopment and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings **(see LC1)**

TARGETS

- Huron County attracts and retains high end businesses in downtowns

INDICATORS

- Number of businesses
- # of people employed
- # of heritage buildings
- # of existing buildings re-used
- Volume of foot traffic relative to a benchmark
- % of local versus visitor

Economic Security

GREEN ENERGY

Huron County will utilize local renewable energy sources.

GE1. Maximize Local Energy Generation in Huron County

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (< 5 YRS)

Capacity Building

- Build organizational and citizen capacity to initiate small-scale energy projects (e.g. solar, biomass, geothermal, anaerobic, hydro, wind; and alternative ownership including cooperatives)
- Foster capacity within the industry for green building/retrofit projects
- Foster discussion on how to enhance community benefit from large scale green energy projects (i.e. municipal and/or energy co-op)
- Promote the use of a mix of energy sources in Huron County municipal buildings, and employ local renewable energy sources when appropriate
- Education and awareness on the facts and reasons why green energy is beneficial

FUTURE ACTIONS (>5 YRS)

- Embark on a Regional Community Energy Plan
- Explore marketing opportunities to attract manufacturers of renewable energy generation equipment
- Investigate opportunities for co-generation with neighbouring municipalities (e.g. wood chips for biofuels, residual hot water output for district heating)
- Explore the use of landfill gas capture
- Improve the approval process for new energy production (e.g. mitigate obstacles for selling power back to the grid)
- Explore the potential of gas capture from manure or sewage as an energy source
- Develop policies for the appropriate siting of wind power generation that conforms with the goals of the Huron County community
- Explore energy storage opportunities (e.g. holding ponds for hydro generators)
- Explore the potential of the use of lake water for geo-thermal applications for community energy generation.

TARGETS

- 50% of energy in Huron County is from renewable sources by 2030

INDICATORS

- Total Energy (kWh or MWh) from renewable energy sources
- % of energy consumed in Huron from those renewable energy sources
- % or # of locally owned renewable energy sources



Sustainable Huron TAKE ACTION

A Declaration of Community Partners for Sustainable Huron.

Declaration of Community Partners to Implement the Sustainable Huron Plan

Our Commitment...

The undersigned organization commits to:

1. Support the Vision, Principles and Goals of Sustainable Huron
2. Join together to be part of the Sustainable Huron Community Partnership to initiate and sustain implementation of the Priority Projects identified in Sustainability Plan, our plan to ensure the long-term well-being of our community.
3. Work with other Sustainable Huron Partners, community organizations and individuals to take local responsibility for actions that contribute to community sustainability.
4. Share knowledge and progress on our plan's implementation with the citizens of Huron and other communities by attending the annual Sustainable Huron community conference and share your accomplishments, lessons learned, and aspirations with other Sustainable Huron Partners and citizens.



Appendix C Current Conditions Report

TAKE ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE HURON



Under the Direction of: The Sustainable
Huron Steering Committee
Huron County

December 2011

"Invest a decade to prosper a century."
Dr. Avi Friedman

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The preparation of this sustainable community plan was carried out with assistance from the Green Municipal Fund, a Fund financed by the Government of Canada and administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Notwithstanding this support, the views expressed are the personal views of the authors, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Government of Canada accept no responsibility for them.

This plan was prepared by Lura Consulting, under the direction of the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee.



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A

Background

1 Introduction

In the past few years, the County of Huron's municipal leadership has sparked and nurtured a collaborative process to create a design for a sustainable future for Huron County. This direction is rooted in the report *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* (2009). *Take Action* begins to outline the rationale for a sustainable future, and the founding principles upon which a future action plan will be based as well lists numerous actions to be taken. It is clearly reflective of the unique community values shared within the County populace. In order to bring *Take Action* to the next stage, Huron County has undertaken a complete sustainability plan to help the ideas in *Take Action* come to fruition.

In early 2010, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities recognized the County's commitment to sustainability through the provision of funding under the Green Municipal Fund. These funds enabled Huron County to move forward, collaboratively refine and prioritize actions, and develop a Sustainable Huron Plan. Including current conditions analysis, data supporting each theme, a schedule of actions (short, medium, long term), a robust implementation model, and relevant and measurable progress indicators.

The *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* report identifies 10 themes to focus sustainability efforts in Huron County:

- Economy
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- Energy
- Livable Communities
- Natural Environment
- Population
- Downtowns
- Community Needs
- Healthy Active Communities

1.1 Report Scope and Format

The intent of this report is to provide a collection of knowledge reflecting the current state of Huron County. The current conditions presented in this report will be the starting point for identifying goals and strategies for the development of Huron County's Sustainability Plan. Due to the scope of this report, it is intended to only provide an overview of the pertinent information, rather than a comprehensive and detailed description of activities and initiatives within Huron County. By first understanding the current situation, policy priorities can be identified. Baseline information will also aid the development of indicators and ways of measuring and monitoring the success of the final Sustainability Plan for Huron County.

The information in this report has been compiled into sectors that mirror those presented in *Take Action for a Sustainable Huron*, summarizing the key points of information for each goal area. For each of the 10 goal areas, a brief overview of the situation is provided, gleaned from a review of existing documents and information sources. The information sources reviewed in the development of this report include the following (a detailed list of reviewed sources can be found in Appendix A):

- Legislation and Policy
- County and Municipal documents
- Data from Statistics Canada
- Informational pamphlets, booklets, and flyers from organizations around the County
- Informal discussions with experts

The Current Conditions Report for the Huron County Sustainability Plan is organized as follows:

PART A – BACKGROUND

- Purpose and scope of the report
- Context and policy overview for sustainability planning in Huron

PART B – CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Summary of vision and current conditions by theme (as identified in *Take Action for Sustainable Huron*)

PART C - REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- Strategic planning analysis and next steps in the Sustainable Planning process

1.2 Why Plan for Sustainability?

Sustainability planning identifies the importance of, and interconnectivity between, the three pillars of sustainability: the economy, the environment, and society and culture. The environmental rationale is viewed as the basis for the original concept of 'sustainable development' and is the foundation that supports our economy and our society. In other words, the interdependence of economic viability, environmental health and society well-being is paramount to sustainability.

There are numerous benefits to planning for sustainability. Research indicates that successful communities have placed strategic, high-priority emphasis on quality-of-life conditions rooted in sustainability. This includes factors such as a thriving economy, healthy natural environment, and strong socio-cultural opportunities. A thriving economy will allow a region to attract a skilled labour force, increase regional competitiveness, and foster new growth and in so doing will enhance the tax base allowing for the expansion and maintenance of services. A natural environment which is healthy not only holds intrinsic value but also contributes to the quality of life in a place for all who reside and visit there. Socio-cultural factors contribute to the social fabric of a community; this includes strong social services, arts and culture opportunities, and health and safety considerations amongst many others. In order to support the success and development of sustainability in the aforementioned spheres, a sustainability plan will aid in accessing federal and provincial funding, as well as identify opportunities for financial savings through partnerships and streamlined efforts. Please see Figure 1 for a list of benefits relating to a strong sustainable foundation.

Many human activities emit increasing amounts of heat trapping gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, into the atmosphere. These greenhouse gases are causing rising global temperatures (International Panel on Climate Change, 2007). The *Climate Change Position Paper* from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (2010) stresses that even with a moderate reduction of greenhouse gases, average temperatures in Ontario will rise by at least 2.5 degrees by the year 2050, according to findings from an expert panel in 2009. The consensus of the scientific community is that "any temperature increase exceeding 2°C will result in grave environmental, social, and economic disruption", making climate change action a necessity if to ensure the community sustainability (AMO, 2010).

The County of Huron has taken the first steps to ensuring a sustainable future for its residents. Sustainable Huron is a community-wide initiative led by County officials to raise awareness and develop actions to reduce Huron's vulnerability and to enhance community capacity. Huron County has recognized the need to prepare for some major 'drivers of change'. Peak oil has been identified by Sustainable Huron as one of the most important drivers for change in the coming decades, as it will produce unique challenges for the settlement patterns and economic pursuits in rural areas.

"Because climate change threatens to irrevocably change the environment around us, Ontario municipalities will be faced with numerous challenging decisions as they adapt to these new circumstances. More frequent extreme weather events will damage built capital including municipal infrastructure. Exposure to more pronounced threats, such as heat waves, will tax our public health units and can erode human capital."

Climate Change Position Paper, AMO, 2010

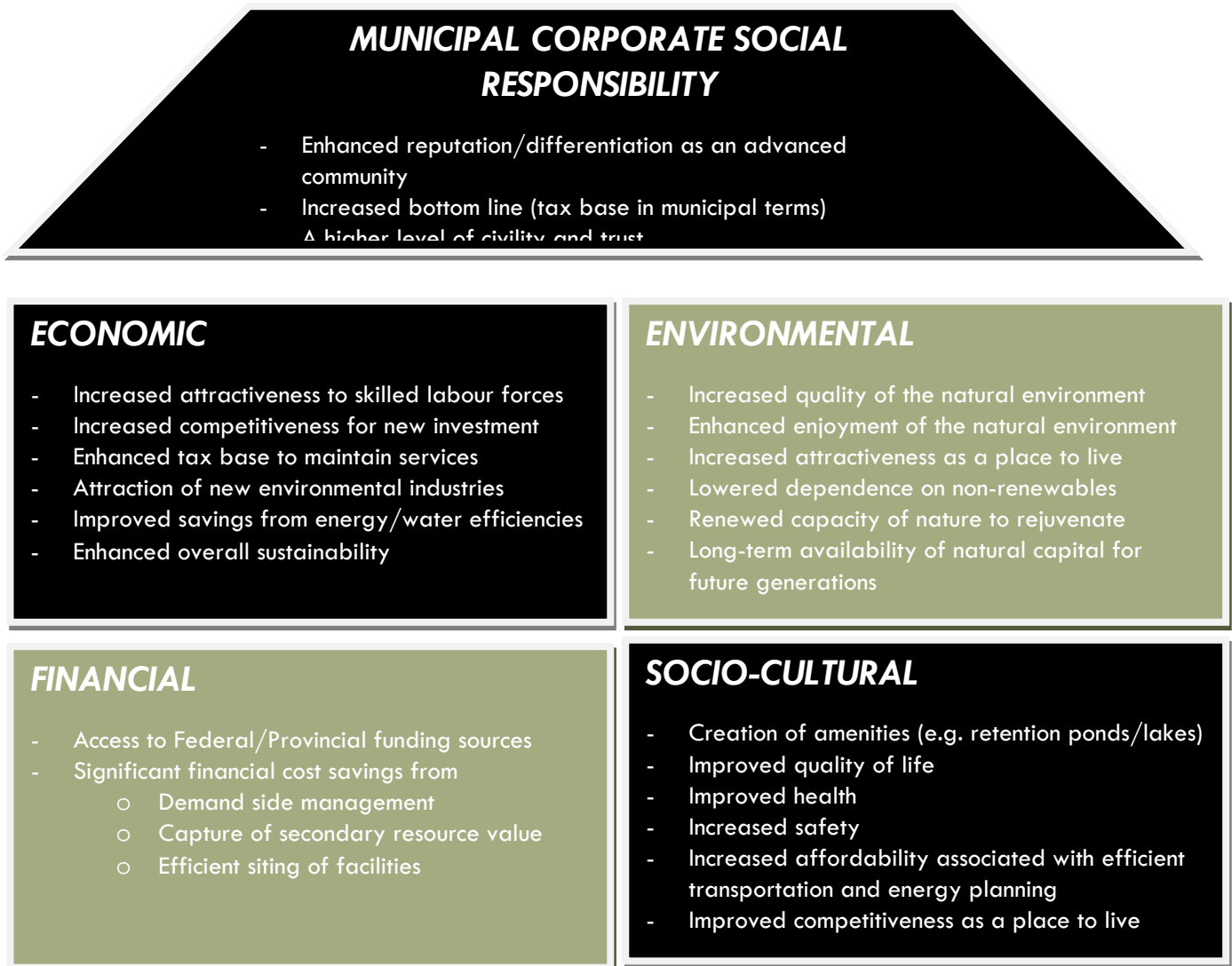
"Sustainability is about ensuring the long-term well-being of the planet, people, and economy. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Take Action for Sustainable Huron

While most sustainability plans are rooted in the urban environment, many of the issues that rural areas encounter are similar. However, rural regions in Ontario have also faced a unique set of problems, such as periods of population decline, loss of manufacturing jobs, decline of local merchants in downtowns, continued consolidation and market pressures on agriculture, strained natural systems from woodlots to aquifers, and social issues resulting from isolation and limited access to services.

For more information on the policies and strategic actions identified by federal, provincial and regional governments to address issues of sustainability and resiliency on a national and local level, please refer to section 2 on Context.

FIGURE 1: BENEFITS TO MUNICIPALITIES OF A STRONG SUSTAINABLE FOUNDATION ADAPTED FROM THE AMO'S SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING TOOLKIT)



2 Context

The first step to identifying priorities and actions for a sustainable Huron is to gain an understanding of the current situation and its context. The following section provides an overview of the relevant context for interpreting Huron's current conditions. First, the legislative framework is outlined in Policy and Governance, including the hierarchy of land use planning policy and action. Second, a brief overview of Huron County is provided, including basic demographic information and trends.

2.1 Policy and Governance

The *Municipal Act* prescribes the roles and responsibilities of municipalities. The Act provides municipalities with both general (natural person) powers and ten specific spheres of jurisdiction, including such things as roads, waste management, drainage and flood control, and parks. The municipal council's actions under land use planning largely affect the sustainability in an area, particularly the decisions regarding infrastructure expenditures.

Land use planning in Ontario is regulated by the *Planning Act* and associated land use plans and policy statements. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) administers the Act and the land use planning system in Ontario. Ontario has a policy-led land use planning system, where policy direction is provided by the province and municipalities prepare an official plan that requires approval by the Minister. Municipal land use planning must be consistent with provincial policy.

The *Planning Act* identifies a number of provincial interests in Section 2 addressing the physical, social, economic, and natural environment that must be regarded in planning decisions. Planning decisions must also be consistent with policy statements and conform to provincial plans.

The *Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS), issued under the authority of the *Planning Act*, provides policies to promote sustainability and direct how to manage land use planning.

The *Conservation Authorities Act* charges Conservation Authorities in Ontario to ensure the conservation, restoration and responsible management of water, land and natural habitat through programs that balance human, environmental and economic needs.

The following is a brief summary of relevant policy as it relates to key focus areas of sustainability planning.

2.1.1 Agriculture

Provincial policy is supportive of protecting agriculture in Ontario through the land use planning system. A provincial interest identified in the *Planning Act* is the protection of agricultural resources in the Province.

One of the themes of the PPS is the wise use and management of resources. Agriculture is specifically addressed indicating that prime agriculture areas shall be protected and that specialty crop areas are given the highest priority for protection. Settlement boundaries can only be expanded into prime agricultural areas (no specialty crop areas) at the time of a comprehensive review, when projected growth cannot be accommodated through intensification and redevelopment and no reasonable alternatives are available.

2.1.2 Built Environment

The *Ontario Heritage Act* gives municipalities and the provincial government powers to preserve the heritage of Ontario through the protection of heritage buildings and archaeological sites. The Act allows municipalities and the provincial government to designate individual properties and districts in the Province as being of cultural heritage value or interest.

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, public sector organizations are required to prepare annual accessibility plans that address a broad range of disability issues. The Plans must also examine all aspects of an organization's operations, including bylaws, practices, facilities, programs, and services.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing administers the *Building Code Act* and the *Ontario Building Code*, which governs the construction of new buildings and the renovation and maintenance of existing buildings. The code is a mechanism to achieve efficient development and to promote public safety. It also regulates energy and water efficiency, and barrier-free accessibility.

2.1.3 Species and Habitat

The Federal *Fisheries Act* assigns the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada the responsibility to conserve and protect fish and fish habitat and applies to the whole of Canada, including private property in every province and territory. The Act defines fish habitat as "*spawning grounds and nursery, rearing, food supply and migration areas on which fish depend directly or indirectly to carry out their life processes.*"

Canada's *Species at Risk Act* includes measures to protect both the species and the habitat. On nonfederal owned lands the Act only applies to federally-listed endangered, threatened or extirpated aquatic species and migratory bird species. The Act seeks to protect the species as well as their habitat.

2.1.4 Water

Canada's *Drinking Water Sources Act* requires the Federal Minister of the Environment to establish an agency with the power to identify and protect Canada's watersheds. Implementation of the Act is in cooperation with the provinces and will represent sources of drinking water in the future. This Act intends to recognize Canada's drinking water sources that are threatened by land use and development that may have an impact on the quality of the water and its suitability as drinking water.

Ontario's *Clean Water Act* sets out to ensure that Ontario delivers safe drinking water by requiring municipalities and conservation authorities to map the sources of municipal drinking water supply to protect and prevent the supply from being depleted or contaminated.

The Ontario *Nutrient Management Act* is a measure taken by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment to maintain Ontario's priority standards for the protection of surface water and groundwater.

The *Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act* was recently passed by the Ontario Legislature. The new act sets the framework for: encouraging water efficiency among Ontarians, making Ontario a North American leader in developing water technologies and services, and strengthening sustainable municipal water planning by helping improve the efficiency of municipal infrastructure and services.

2.1.5 Environmental Protection

The purpose of the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* is to protect the

environment and the health and well-being of Canadians. A major part of

the Act is aimed at preventing pollution and addresses the potentially dangerous chemical substances in an environmentally responsible manner.

Ontario's Ministry of the Environment administers the *Environmental Protection Act* to prevent pollution and protect and restore the environment. The Ministry is also responsible for permitting for such activities that emit any pollutants into the natural environment, including issuing Certificates of Approval (C of A).

Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2014) outlines the measures the Government of Ontario is taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also recognizes the need to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of changing weather patterns resulting from heat-trapping gases already in the atmosphere. Five goals have been identified:

- Avoid loss and unsustainable investment, and take advantage of economic opportunities.

- Take reasonable and practical measures to increase climate resilience of ecosystems.

Adaptation is the process societies go through in order to cope with an uncertain future. Adapting to climate change entails taking measures to reduce the negative effects of climate change — or take advantage of the positive effects. For example, faced with greater storm activity, we may change the way we design and build our roads, bridges and buildings to better withstand these weather events.

Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy & Action Plan (2011)

- Create and share risk-management tools to support adaptation efforts across the province.
- Achieve a better understanding of future climate change impacts across the province.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with others.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has identified municipalities as partners in the provinces climate change strategy (AMO, 2010).

2.1.6 Energy

The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure has responsibility over energy generating facilities in Ontario, as well as over several agencies, including Ontario Power Generation (OPG). Energy production in Ontario is the responsibility of OPG, whose generating assets include three nuclear, five fossil, and 65 hydroelectric generating stations.

A culture of conservation is promoted by the *Green Energy Act, 2009*, which is geared to expediting the growth of clean, renewable sources of energy like wind, solar, hydro, biomass and biogas. Energy conservation initiatives in the Act include:

- Allowing certain renewable energy projects regardless of any restrictions in place (e.g. municipal bylaws, policies) (Section 5)
- Make goods, services, and technology more efficient (Section 4)
- Home efficiency disclosure when selling homes (Section 3)
- Requiring public agencies to prepare energy conservation and demand management plans (Section 6)

2.1.7 Solid Waste

The *Waste Diversion Act, 2002* was introduced to promote the reduction, reuse, and recycling of waste, and to provide for the development, implementation and operation of waste diversion programs. Current approved waste diversion programs include the Blue Box, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), and Household Hazardous Waste (HHW).

The Ministry of the Environment’s “Ontario’s 60% Waste Diversion Goal - A Discussion Paper” (June 2004), outlined waste diversion goals and how to reach them. The Paper established a provincial goal of 60% waste diversion. The Ministry of the Environment also released a proposed policy document in 2007 entitled *Policy Statement on Waste Management Planning: Best Practices for Waste Managers*. Long-term waste management plans, integrated with other on-going strategic planning (e.g. growth plans, environmental or sustainability plans) are recommended, as well as coordination with the 5-year Official Plan review (or when 10 years or less of disposal capacity remains).

Huron County established a permanent Household Hazardous Waste Depot in 2008 using COMRIF funding at a mid-Huron site. This site allows Huron residents to dispose of hazardous wastes year round so that they may be treated and recycled (which happens offsite in Hamilton).

2.1.8 Health

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds health care services in Ontario through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP).

The *Local Health System Integration Act, 2006* changed the way Ontario's health care system is managed by creating 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). These LHINs are not-for-profit corporations that act as a multi-stakeholder, regional planning unit taking full responsibility for health services in their communities.

2.1.9 Education

Ontario's Ministry of Education administers the publicly funding elementary and secondary education system in the Province under the *Education Act*. The Ministry develops and implements the Ontario curriculum and promotes education through various programs. Information and programs for adult learning and postsecondary education are also available.

2.1.10 Poverty

Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, *Breaking the Cycle*, is a plan that was developed in 2008 and sets an aggressive target for poverty reduction. It sets a goal of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25 per cent over five years through investments in the education system and social assistance programs to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

The recently passed *Poverty Reduction Act* (December 2008) strengthens the commitment to reduce child poverty and also includes adult poverty. The Act requires the provincial government to maintain or develop clear poverty reduction strategies with set timelines and targets, as well as assess the strategy, at least every five years.

Affordable housing support in Ontario is administered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing and delivered by municipalities and the private and non-profit sectors. Under the *Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program*, new homes and access to housing are being provided for low-income families, senior citizens, persons living with mental illness, and victims of domestic violence.

2.2 An Overview of Huron County

The following section provides an overview of Huron County. The baseline conditions provide important information that will set the context for the current state conditions and determining the priorities and focus for the sustainability planning.

2.2.1 Huron County's Origin

The land now known as Huron County has a rich and somewhat contentious history. The French imparted the name 'Huron' to the 'Ouendat' First Nations people from the upper end of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. However, the tract of land where Huron County is now located once belonged to the Mohawk and Chippewa First Nations, and the Attawandarons before them. It is believed that the first European to reach the area was Étienne Brûlé, a coureur de bois and servant of Samuel de Champlain, who lived with the Hurons, learned their language and assimilated into aboriginal culture.

Huron's rich cultural heritage not only includes contributions from the French, but also Scottish settlers, such as Dr. William 'Tiger' Dunlop and John Galt. Galt co-founded Goderich and Guelph as Superintendent of the Canada Company, the land development enterprise that opened the area for settlement. Other influential historical figures include Col. Anthony Van Egmond, a member of the William Lyon Mackenzie 1837 Rebellion, and Thomas Mercer Jones. Huron County was created in 1849 and was part of Huron District until 1851.

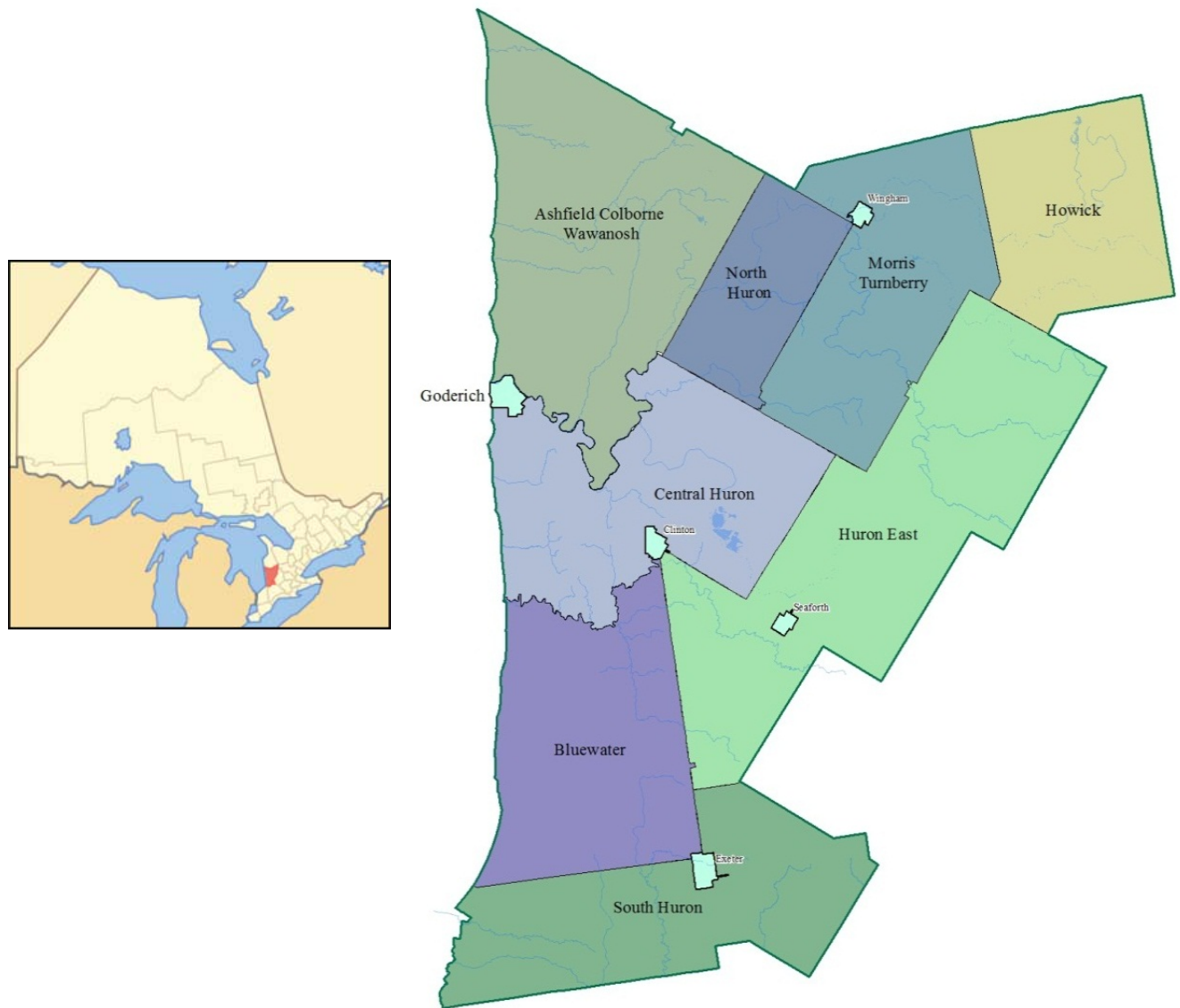
2.2.2 Geography

Huron County is located in southwestern Ontario, on the shoreline of Lake Huron and covers approximately 3,397 square kilometres. The County is subdivided into nine lower-tier municipalities as follows:

- Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh (Formerly Ashfield, West Wawanosh & Colborne)
- Bluewater (Formerly Bayfield, Stanley, Hensall, Zurich & Hay)
- Central Huron (Formerly Goderich Township Clinton & Hullett)
- Howick
- Town of Goderich
- Huron East (Formerly Brussels, Grey, Seaforth, Tuckersmith & McKillop)
- Morris-Turnberry (Formerly Morris & Turnberry)
- North Huron (Formerly East Wawanosh, Wingham & Blyth)
- South Huron (Formerly Exeter, Osborne & Stephen)

The surrounding areas of Huron County include; Perth County, Wellington County, Middlesex-London, Lambton County, and Grey-Bruce. Huron County is the second largest geographical region in southwestern Ontario at approximately 97 kilometres long from north to south and 48 kilometres wide from east to west. Figure 2 illustrates the location of Huron County as well as the nine lower-tier municipalities.

FIGURE 2: HURON COUNTY'S GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT IN ONTARIO; THE MUNICIPALITIES AND TOWNSHIPS OF HURON COUNTY



B

Current Conditions

3 The State of Huron County

The current conditions presented in this section are intended to act as the starting point for identifying goals, and strategies for the development of Huron County's Sustainability Plan. It provides an overview of the pertinent information for each of the ten goal areas identified in *Take Action for Sustainable Huron*:

- Economy
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- Energy
- Livable Communities
- Natural Environment
- Population
- Downtowns
- Community Needs
- Healthy Active Communities

The current state information presented in this section is to be reviewed and deliberated on by the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee members in order to reach a consensus on desired future directions and on the indicators needed to measure objectives.

For each of the 10 goal areas a brief overview of the current situation is provided, gleaned from a review of existing documents and information. Among the information presented for each goal is: regional and local initiatives, policies and plans, provincial policy highlights, statistical information and the community vision identified through the *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* process. The purpose is to provide a synopsis of the current situation in the County of Huron; no inferences have been made.

3.1 Economy

Provincial interests identified in the *Planning Act* include providing adequate employment opportunities and protecting the financial and economic well-being of the Province and its municipalities. Provincial Policy Statement policies promote long-term economic prosperity, indicating that planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness and require the appropriate planning and protection of employment areas.

Community Vision for the Economy:

In 2030, the Huron County economy will continue to provide economic security and opportunity for its residents through diversification, business retention, local provision, education and training opportunities.

The County of Huron's economy is driven largely by the agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and creative industry. Service, trade and retail businesses are integrated and supported by each of these four economic pillars. To promote economic development in the County, local Official Plans will: ensure that there is a mixture of employment opportunities, including industrial, commercial and institutional; protect and preserve employment areas for future uses; maintain a range of sites for employment uses; and ensure well-maintained infrastructure is available to meet future and current needs.

The County of Huron's economy relies heavily on self-employment, as illustrated by the fact that one in five workers is self-employed. The Huron Business Centre is a source of help for local entrepreneurs who are starting up a small business or for individuals who are looking for general business information. The Centre houses both the Huron Business Development Corporation and the Huron Small Business Enterprise Centre. These organizations work with the County of Huron to offer support to small businesses and assist in their development and success through local initiatives.

The Midwestern Ontario Regional Green Jobs Strategy (2010) identifies the region as having an emerging green industry that has an established business history. While many definitions of Green Jobs exist, the Strategy limits it to jobs within the energy efficiencies, renewable energy or climate change adaption fields. Consultation with the Huron Manufacturing Association Renewable Energy Networking Group identified knowledge gaps and poor connections between group members and other institutions and groups outside of Huron County.

The Huron Manufacturing Association (HMA) is run by a group of manufacturing leaders that recognize the need for community support and awareness for growth in the manufacturing sector. The Manufacturing Coordinator works with manufacturers, local organizations, the County of Huron, local municipalities, the Avon District Maitland District School Board, and the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board to implement the priorities and actions outlined in the HMA Strategic Plan.

A 3-year strategic plan for economic renewal, entitled "The Huron Economic Development Matters Initiative", was developed under the leadership of the Warden's Task Force and the Huron Business Development Corporation for the term June 2007- May 2010 and funded by the Rural Economic Development Fund. The County was awarded the Best Strategic Plan in the Business Development category in 2009 for the plan, which outlines three project areas: economic growth, youth engagement, and community revitalization.

The County of Huron employs a Senior Economic Development Officer whose role is to manage core economic development programs. The Senior Economic Officer develops and implements new programs and initiatives that encourage the growth and promotion of the following sectors: manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, creative industries, retail and service.

The Economic Development Officer is supported by the Business Development Co-ordinator. Currently, Huron County has retained a Co-ordinator on a two-year contract to help assist with BR + E studies throughout the County, and other projects that will help to strengthen the many Huron County downtown areas. The SEDO also responds to inquiries regarding local business expansions and from companies considering locating in Huron County.

A number of areas, such as Bayfield, Zurich, Goderich, South Huron and Brussels have a local Chamber of Commerce. The Chambers of Commerce leaders regularly come together and hold a regional Chamber of Commerce meeting. There are also a number of Business Associations and Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) that exist within local regions of the County

3.1.1 Business Retention and Expansion

Several municipalities such as Goderich, Bluewater (Bayfield), Huron East (Seaforth), and South Huron, have undertaken Business Retention and Expansion projects. Wingham and Brussels currently have Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) studies underway. Currently, Huron County does not have a County wide BR+E. However, in 2009/2010, the County and the Huron Business Development Corporation, in collaboration with the nine municipalities, industry associations, the private sector and other stakeholder groups undertook a project to develop an Economic Development Strategy (Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint). This new Strategy represents a first for Huron County and will guide the course of economic development for the next 5 years. Economic Development Services (EDS) encourages investment that creates and retains jobs in Huron County, through the following five areas of focus:

- Representing the collective economic development assets of the County to external audiences;
- Supporting and helping develop the capacity of local economic development enterprises, including municipalities, local ED agencies, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, etc. for their own ED efforts;
- Working with key industry sectors on a County-wide basis on specific projects and initiatives, including cross-sectoral efforts;
- Working with all economic development and promotion agencies, and industry associations, to ensure coordination and alignment in collective efforts; and,
- Improving the overall economic development environment across the County through undertaking appropriate research and provision of information, influencing and advising on policy, and advocating on behalf of County businesses.

3.1.2 Education and Training

Huron County is home to a public and catholic school board. There are also Mennonite and Amish parochial schools as well as a Christian school in Huron County.

While there are not any formal post-secondary educational institutions in Huron County, there are opportunities for continued learning in the region. Three organizations have partnerships with different post-secondary institutions allowing residents to earn University credits in Huron.

The Lake Huron Learning Collaborative is partnered with the University of Western Ontario, REACH is partnered with the University of Guelph Ridgetown campus, and Healthkick is partnered with Georgian College.

The Centre for Employment & Learning, a division of the Avon Maitland District School Board, in partnership with Fanshawe College, the Huron Business Development Corporation, provide access to local and online training opportunities and in-person support on program research and course registrations through elearnnetwork.ca (formerly part of the Spokes network). [Elearnnetwork.ca](http://elearnnetwork.ca) has partnerships with 34 educational institutions and there are more than 7,500 courses and hundreds of certificate, college diploma and university degree programs available. The Centres for Employment & Learning also administers the LearningHUB, a free online program available to adult learners across Ontario that is funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). The LearningHUB provides opportunities to upgrade reading, writing, math, computer and other essential skills.

A number of professional development programs, seminars, and workshops are available to residents of Huron through the SBEC and HBDC. Topics could include small business programs, customer service, or industry focused seminars (e.g. Lean Manufacturing techniques). The Lake Huron Learning Collaborative also provides a number of learning opportunities for personal and professional development. The programs include general interest opportunities, for-credit, and post-secondary courses.

3.1.3 Tourism

Using the brand “Ontario’s West Coast”, the Huron Tourism Association (HTA) develops and implements cost-efficient strategies designed to market the County’s tourism industry with the County and local municipalities. Each year Huron is home to numerous festivals and fall fairs. Two of the highly regarded and visited festivals include: “Taste of Huron Festival” and the Celtic Roots Festival.

Huron County was host to 869,000 visitors in 2008, and almost 45% of those were overnight visitors (Huron County Regional Tourism Profile, 2008). Visitors were attracted to the region for a variety of reasons including: visits for pleasure (65%), outdoor or sporting activity (47 %), culture, heritage, performance activities (20%), provincial parks (7%), and also festivals/fairs (6%). The County and HTA produce an annual Travel Guide and brochures promoting fishing, cycling and hiking, as well as micro websites for golf and hiking. The 2010 Tourism Marketing Strategy for Huron County identifies the upcoming key tourism trends, including: Ontarians traveling closer to home; popularity of ‘get-aways’ and day trippers from Huron and from nearby larger urban areas; agricultural and genealogical interest and

local food tours; and, the large 'baby-boomer' population with interests in soft adventure trips.

A Tourism Marketer works with the HTA and the County to encourage more business and increased sales for the Tourism industry. This role is further supported by a part-time Tourism Coordinator. The Tourism marketing team has developed a number of marketing campaigns to help promote the area including social media outreach with active twitter and Facebook pages and other public relations campaigns. They also facilitate a "brochure-swap" which entails a coming together of operators to learn about one another's businesses so they may help support one another through cross-marketing and cross-promotions.

Huron County is a member of Regional Tourism Organization 4 and is working with neighbouring Counties to develop regional marketing and tourism development initiatives, including *Time Out Travel*.

Huron County offers customer representative service training. The program, "Best host, west coast" certifications ensures a high level of service, professionalism, and friendliness to the area's guests.

3.1.4 Manufacturing

In Huron, manufacturing is big business with 188 manufacturers located within the county. This sector is one of the County's largest employers (16%) and is the sole focus of the Huron Manufacturing Association.

Huron County boasts an active available workforce of 30,470 workers, with many ticketed welders, fitters and millwrights who serve the manufacturing sector living and working in the community. Major manufacturers such as Wecast Industries Inc. recognize the outstanding work ethic of Huron County workers, which they attribute to Huron's rural and agricultural roots.

3.1.5 Creative Economy

The County of Huron is currently undertaking a "Creative Huron" initiative which seeks to promote the development of the Creative Economy. The Creative Economy, as defined by Richard Florida is an economy that offers and supports careers which are knowledge based and focus on generating new knowledge and information. These can include a variety of roles – from information technologies, innovative opportunities in design or manufacturing, architecture, film, music, arts, research and development, software creation, to other specialized roles such as consultancies, legal, accountants, etc. Further, due to an advanced state of communications and the internet these positions can be housed anywhere. Within the county the creative industry sector will find fast, reliable and affordable broadband services.

The new Huron Arts and Heritage Network (HAHN) is set to help foster the development of arts and heritage focused businesses and non-profits in the area. This will include the development of

an online hub with resources dedicated to funding, assistance with grant writing, information on other creative services in the area among much others.

3.1.6 Retail and other Small Business

Huron County is committed to fostering start-ups and small business. The Small Business Enterprise Centre is one of the many available business services that makes Huron an ideal place to start a business.

There are a wide array of small businesses in Huron County from the small specialty shops in the many downtowns, to agri-business, to manufacturing. With the business supports available in Huron, it is an attractive place for new as well as seasoned entrepreneurs to pursue their business dreams.

Small business owners are encouraged to participate in the County's Chamber of Commerce, BIAs, and other local business groups. The Business Leaders Network is a service and retail group in Huron that brings together leaders from the lower municipalities to discuss different business issues and helps one another stay apprised of the latest developments in Huron County.

Community Vision for Agriculture:

In 2030, Huron County will have a strong and diversified agricultural industry, providing food to the local community and beyond using environmental best practices.

3.2 Agriculture

The County's Official Plan indicates that Huron leads all counties and regions in Ontario in total value of production and therefore recognizes that agriculture lands are of national significance. Policies are supportive of maintaining agriculture as the dominant form of land use, and therefore direct development to existing urban areas.

Much of Huron County is classified as prime land (class 1, 2 and 3) in the Canada Land Inventory of agriculture capability and will be retained for agricultural practices as mandated in the Farming and Food Production Protection Act.

According to the 2011 Huron Farm and Rural Guide, hogs accounted for 19% of the farm cash receipts in Huron County in 2009, for a total of \$140.8 million. Other leading commodities included poultry at \$111.4 M (15.3%), cattle and calves at 103.3 M (14%), dairy at 91.7 M (12.5 %), corn at 78 M (10.7%) and soybeans at 71.3 M (9.8%), for a total of 728 million in farm cash receipts in 2009. The main products in Huron are crops, livestock, poultry and dairy.

The Huron County Agriculture sector is very much thriving with many opportunities to pursue new education and training opportunities which help farmers hone current skills and develop new ones. There are a number of farm development groups, small business networks, as well as many active 4-H clubs (beef, dairy, sheep, poultry, horses, etc.) across Huron County.

3.2.1 Diversity of Sector

According to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs the three top farm types by industry group in Huron County include: oilseed and grain farming with 975 farms, beef cattle ranching and farming with 543 farms, and hog and pig farming with 310 farms. There are 9 'groups' of commodities in Huron County, the main ones being livestock-based, including hogs, cattle and calves, poultry and dairy.

Huron County has approximately 2,700 farms with over 292, 000 hectares of farmland. In fact, approximately 86% of the total land area in Huron County is farmland. There are three farm organizations: The Huron County Federation of Agriculture (HCFA), the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) and the National Farmers Union-Ontario (NFU-O). Each organization has a local board of directors that farmers can approach with their concerns about the Agriculture Industry. The HCFA currently works in an advocacy role for 2,000 farm families to ensure profitability and sustainability.

3.2.2 Local Food

Locally grown fruits and vegetables are available for sale at farmers markets and through food and nutrition initiatives. The Good Food Box program provides residents with local vegetables and fruits monthly and the "Buy Local! Buy Fresh!" map identifies where local foods can be purchased. Many farms in Huron offer farmgate sales; these can also be

identified using the map. A number of farmers markets can be found throughout the County. These include markets in Goderich, Exeter, Blyth, Bayfield, and Dungannon.

Both programs are administered through Huron-Perth Farm to Table, established in 1999. In 2009, Huron-Perth Farm to Table announced the launch of its Opportunities project, developed in partnership with the Huron Business Development Corporation and funded by the Ontario Market Investment Fund. The program aims to build farmer and market capacity by: training farmers to market and produce local foodstuffs; developing a small-scale incubator kitchen; launching a number of new farmers' markets and establish a farmers' market association; creating a virtual hub that will act as a point of communication and collaboration for food groups; increasing consumer awareness through education and promotion of local food; and, expanding the Good Food Box program.

Combining local harvests with gourmet cooking, the Taste of Huron runs annually in August-September, and marks a significant agricultural tourism initiative in the County.

3.2.3 Sustainable and Niche Agriculture

Huron County has one of the highest uptakes of Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) in Canada. The program is a national initiative to help the agriculture sector better identify its impacts on the environment and to promote growth of stewardship activities within the agricultural industry. The usage of fertilizer, herbicide, and pesticides has been greatly reduced compared to previous generations. Another increasing practice that is contributing to increased sustainability in the region is the concept of minimum tillage. Minimum tillage has significant savings in fuel usage, compaction, and causes less soil erosion.

3.2.4 Organic Farming

Huron Perth Farm to Table is currently undertaking an opportunity program to assess the viability of organic food production in Huron County. Currently, there a number of organic farms in Huron County however only about 2 – 3 % of farms are certified organic.

3.2.5 Other Agricultural Opportunities

The Huron Economic Development Matters (HEDM) partnership recently commissioned a Viticulture and Wine Industry Study assessing the climactic conditions for commercial grape production in Huron County. The study examines the use of wind machines that allow the industry to drastically reduce the cold damage to vineyards, which can dramatically improve the potential for growing grapes in the region. Three climatic test towers have been established to monitor the study for a three-year period, slated to end in 2011-2012. Success of this project could translate to multi-sector benefits in agriculture, tourism and culture. Potential spin-off benefits include: development of new niche food markets, accommodations development and increased commercial retail business.

The HEDM has also commissioned an Artisanal Cheese Industry study along with an investment prospectus, due to growing market demand for high-end specialty food items, like artisanal cheese, and renewed consumer interest in local food. The project has the potential to further diversify Huron County's agri-food and tourism industries. The investment prospectus outlines opportunities related to the production and marketing of 10 specialty cheeses, while the study recommends the development of a suite of entirely new cheese appellations, named after the communities where they are produced.

A key priority identified in the Economic Opportunities Blueprint industry workshops was to ensure that the five existing abattoirs (slaughterhouses) in the County have the ability to be self-sustaining in the face of changing and increasingly rigorous standards. It suggests that the HBDC play a role in working with them to achieve this sustainability and that the County take a leadership role in promoting the importance of local abattoirs as a key element of an integrated local agricultural industry.

Huron County is home to well established food and feed processors, such as E.D. Smith in Seaforth, Kenpal Farm Products and Hensall District Co-op, all with important contributions to the County's manufacturing base. As well, existing and emerging niche food processors are also playing a part in the development of new economic opportunities and markets.

3.2.6 Agriculture and Youth

There are a number of initiatives that help to support Huron's youth participation in the region's largest economic industry. Many of the agriculturally focused groups, such as Huron Perth Farm to Table and the Huron Federation of Agriculture run seminars and workshops that promote farm succession planning and provide assistance and facilitation of this process. St. Anne's high school currently allows students interested in agriculture to pursue an agriculture specialization throughout their secondary studies. As well, the annual Agriculture and Water Festival in Seaforth saw more than 600 students from grades 4 and 5 attend in 2011.

3.3 Transportation

Provincial interests identified in the *Planning Act* include the provision of and efficient use of transportation systems and the promotion of development that is designed to be sustainable, supports public transit, and is oriented towards pedestrians. PPS policy direction is also provided to maintain connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes. Policies seek to minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support the development of viable alternative choices and public transit as well as other alternative transportation modes, including commuter rail and bus, through appropriate land use patterns, density, and mix of uses.

3.3.1 Transportation Demand Management

Huron County completed a draft Transportation Demand Management (TDM) study for the County in March 2011, which is the first step in developing a Huron County transportation strategy. The study assesses the current need for transportation alternatives, reviews best practices from similar rural areas, and identifies and prioritizes new TDM initiatives, including public awareness, incentive programs, and infrastructure improvements. Several key areas for TDM initiative development are identified in the draft study, along with 28 recommended strategies and five pilot projects. Future implementation of the recommended strategies and pilots will be dependent on available funding opportunities and the County's evolving needs, issues and priorities.

In 2007, the Transportation Taskforce was formed through the Huron Community Matters Initiative. The Taskforce prepared a report in 2008 that highlights the lack of transportation in the County as a barrier for certain groups (e.g., seniors, people with disabilities, people with medical needs, youth, and low-income groups). The report identifies the need for improved public transit, shows supporting statistics, and documents transportation best practices from other rural areas.

Community Vision for Transportation:

In 2030, Huron County will have a transportation network providing multi-modal options, such as walking, cycling, roads, rail, water, and air transit that meet the needs of the entire community.

3.3.2 Infrastructure and Services

County Roads and Provincial Highways are an important component of the transportation network in Huron County. There are 3,000 km of road within the County. The most common mode of daily transportation in Huron County is the private automobile. Automobiles are used by approximately 87% (80% as driver, 7% as passenger) of people as the mode of transportation to work, while 11.2% walk or bike, and 0.3% use public transit.

Huron County is currently serviced by a freight railway, the Goderich-Exeter Railway Company. The Harbour, owned by the Town of Goderich, is operated by the Goderich Port Management Corporation. Huron County is also home to three airports (Goderich, Wingham, and Huron Park).

Based on a recent initiative spearheaded by the Town of Goderich in 2010, there is now a public bus transportation service. A license was obtained to operate a public bus service from Goderich to London, Stratford and Kitchener and points in between, and the Town of Goderich houses a bus depot.

Other transportation services include: the nine taxi companies that provide service in various parts of the County; Northlink (NL), a privately-owned charter bus service that provides a variety of interregional passenger and parcel bus services throughout Huron County and the surrounding area; and, EasyRide, a reservation-based transportation service funded by the South West Local Health Integration Unit (LHIN) and administered through ONE CARE.

3.3.3 Active Transportation

A network of trails and cycling routes exist in Huron County and are outlined in the “Your Guide to Huron County Hiking Trails” and the “Your Guide to Cycling in Huron County” brochure. The County offers 150 km of marked hiking trails and 9 cycling routes. The Huron Tourism Association identifies 23 recreational trails throughout the County. These routes are predominantly used for leisure activities rather than for the use of transportation to daily amenities. Several of the downtown cores within the municipalities are very pedestrian oriented.

3.4 Energy

A goal of the community as outlined in the County Official Plan is “to engage in and implement leading energy efficiency practices for building and neighbourhood design, construction, and function.”

3.4.1 Energy Conservation

Energy conservation is not made mandatory within Huron County and occurs on the basis of individual decisions. Most municipalities in Huron County receive their electricity from Hydro One. Other providers include: Festival Hydro in Seaforth and Brussels in Huron East; Westario in Wingham in North Huron; and, Goderich Hydro in Goderich. As well, the Clinton Power Corporation distributes electricity to the Town of Clinton; ensuring over 2,400 people receive local, reliable energy and power on a daily basis. The Clinton Power Corporation is part of the expanding EARTH Corporation who has provided power distribution across Southwestern Ontario for almost a decade.

Users may take part in conservation initiatives being conducted by electricity providers, but no programs are being conducted by municipalities. Bruce Power provides funding through a community sponsorship program for projects that promote energy efficiency.

The Township of North Huron took part in the Audit++ Program, offered by the Energy Services Division. The results of the program indicate that the North Huron Westcast Community Complex has 11 energy saving opportunities and the post audit workshop provided staff with knowledge on energy management opportunities.

The provincial government is moving to require municipalities to develop energy conservation plans.

3.4.2 Energy Generation

The County of Huron is home to 23 commercial turbines operated by Capital Power which produce 109 000 megawatt-hours of electricity each year.

The Midwestern Green Jobs Strategy, located in the town of Brussels provides information services, training, and project help for people interested in the green energy sector. A report summarized the policies and actions needed to attract new business. Huron County farmers are experimenting with Green energy at the local farm level by growing energy-specific crops and installing solar panels and wind turbines. The County of Huron is home to 23 commercial turbines operated by Capital Power, which produce 109,000 megawatt-hours of electricity each year.

The Midwestern Green Jobs Strategy, located in the town of Brussels, provides information services, training, and project help for people interested in the green sector. The Green Jobs Strategy will seek to assemble labour market expertise in the development of green business jobs, and undertake outreach to local employers and communities, in order to understand, anticipate, plan for and implement labour market strategies for job creation in 3 sectors of the region's green economy: renewable energy production; energy efficiency measures; and climate change adaptation. Part of the mandate of the Green Jobs Strategy is to work with municipalities to help develop conservation strategies.

Community Vision for Energy:

In 2030, Huron County will utilize local renewable energy sources and continue to maximize energy conservation.

The Provincial Policy Statement indicates that planning authorities shall support efficiency and improved air quality by planning for efficient use of land, alternative transportation modes, and promoting alternative energy systems and renewable energy (e.g. solar and wind)

The Huron Manufacturers Association Renewable Energy Networking Group looked at the renewable energy markets of wind, solar hot water, solar photovoltaic, biomass and biogas to identify opportunities for local manufacturers to supply systems or parts and services to the renewable energy sector. A report summarized the policies and actions needed to attract new business. Huron County farmers are experimenting with Green energy at the local farm level of growing energy-specific crops, installing solar panels, and wind turbines.

3.4.3 High School Green Teams

Each of the five high schools in Huron County has a Green Team Club. The Green Teams attract students who are interested in environmental issues. The clubs are organized and run by a teacher.

3.4.4 School Curriculum

There are a number of high school courses that have teachings related to the field of sustainability and energy use. These courses include: Geography (Gr. 9, Gr. 12), World Issues (Gr. 12), World Geography (Gr. 12), Environment and Resource Management (Gr. 11), Science (All grades), Manufacturing (Gr.11) Biology (Gr. 11), and Hospitality and Tourism (Gr. 11) and Physics (Gr. 11).

Huron County also offers students interested in the environmental field to pursue a high school certificate with a specialization in the environment. Currently there are 78 students enrolled in this program in Goderich District Collegiate Institute.

3.5 Livable Communities

All components in the “Livable Communities” goal area overlap with other goal areas, and therefore can be found elsewhere within this document.

Community Vision for Livable Communities:

In 2030, Huron County will retain its rural character through planned growth of its settlement areas. Communities will be: compact, pedestrian and bicycle friendly and provide a range of services and facilities.

3.6 Natural Environment

The County and the nine municipalities participate in watershed studies in collaboration with the Conservation Authorities, adjacent municipalities and community groups. The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority produce watershed report cards that provide information on the quality of surface and groundwater, and forest conditions. The Watershed Report Cards are an excellent source of information on the state of the natural environment in Huron County.

The 2007 Maitland Watershed Report Card identifies the following grades:

- Healthy surface water quality conditions (Grade B) for phosphorous, benthic macro-invertebrates and nitrate, with some enhancements needed for E.coli conditions (Grade C);
- Healthy groundwater quality conditions (Grade A) for nitrates and chloride; and,
- Healthy conditions for marginal land in production (Grade A), poor interior forest conditions that require improvement (Grade D); and, forest cover conditions that require some enhancement (Grade C).

The 2007 Ausable Bayfield Watershed Report Card summarizes the state of the 16 watersheds in the Bayfield River, the Ausable River, Parkhill Creek and smaller Lake Huron tributaries. The average grades for all of the watersheds were:

- Poor forest conditions (Grade C) on average, with most of the watersheds falling into a grade of D. Few watersheds had good forest conditions. Agriculture, and in a few areas, urbanization, have resulted in the clearing of much of the Ausable Bayfield watershed forest cover which consequently results in this poor grade; and,
- Moderate to poor surface water quality conditions (Grade B-C). Only one watershed received an A grade. Biological indicators (e.g., E. coli concentrations and the benthic invertebrate communities) in particular tended to reflect poor water quality conditions.

For details on the individual grading, please refer to the comprehensive report cards.

The MVCA Forest Resource Assessment report (March 2010) is a compilation of research and data pertaining to the forest and terrestrial ecosystems in the Maitland and Nine Mile River watersheds. The report identifies that the Terrestrial Team of the Maitland Watershed Partnerships, formed in 1999, is working to develop a comprehensive

approach to improving forest health through understanding the quantity and quality of natural areas and assisting landowners

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Community Vision for the Natural Environment:

In 2030, Huron County will have a healthy, resilient ecosystem with connected natural areas, clean water and diverse flora and fauna.

Assessment report identifies three key environmental priorities to restoring forest ecosystems: increase interior forest; buffer watercourses and wetlands; and, protect fragile lands. The study also points to a need for more comprehensive knowledge of Huron County's forest resources and an updated digital forest inventory.

3.6.1 Water Quality

Provincial and Municipal Policy Context

The Huron County Official Plan states that “source water areas, drinking water supplies and the health of watercourses will be protected and improved as critical resources for the long-term wellbeing of residents and the environment.” Water in Huron County comes from municipal wells (30%), private wells (45%) and Lake Huron (25%).

A Groundwater resource assessment was conducted for the County in 2002, which indicates that only 4.4% of the recorded wells in the County produced poor quality water, largely due to fertilizer and pesticide contamination. The Friends of the Bayfield River and its watershed produced a Pesticide Free Lawn Care pamphlet informing residents about water contaminate concerns.

The Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley Conservation Authorities are part of the ABMV Source Protection Region that has been established by the Provincial government to develop plans for protecting the sources of municipal drinking water systems throughout the region. Two plans will be developed, one for municipal drinking water systems the Ausable Bayfield watersheds and one for the Maitland and Nine Mile watersheds. These plans are to be completed by August 2012. There are many other initiatives that the two Conservation Authorities partner on with Huron County that help to support a healthy natural environment.

One of these initiatives is the Huron Clean Water project. It provides financial and technical assistance to improve and protect water quality on Huron County farms and rural properties. The program provides grants of up to \$5,000 for projects related to erosion control, clean water diversion, livestock fencing, fragile land retirement and wellhead protection. The first three years of the program boasted more than 800 projects. Highlights include the planting of 60 hectares of trees and the establishment of 37 kilometres of windbreaks.

The Water Protection Steering Committee was established in 2004 to bring together representatives from agencies, groups, and municipalities; prioritize and recommend implementation measures to participating groups; and coordinate water protection activities at a broad level. Example projects include the County-funded Huron Clean Water Project, the Septic System Re-Inspection Program and the Anaerobic Digester Pilot Project.

A provincial interest under the *Planning Act* is the conservation of water resources and planning authorities must protect, improve, and restore the quality and quantity of water in planning decisions.

The Lake Huron Shoreline runs for 110 km. Protection is partially facilitated through the non-profit Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation. The Centre helps protect and restore the coastal environment by monitoring water quality, biodiversity, coastal processes, and climate change. The Centre holds education events, such as the “Is the Coast Clear?” conference, and follows the 6 targets/goals outlined in their 2003 Strategic Plan, “Charting the Course”.

As well, the lakeshore beaches and bluffs are designated as ‘natural environments’ through the land use planning policies of the County and the lakeshore municipalities. The ABCA and MVCA help protect their lakeshores through development, alteration to shoreline, and watercourse regulations. Any development along the lakeshore is reviewed for its potential impact on flooding, erosion, conservation of land and pollution.

Two beaches (Bayfield Main Beach and Rotary Cove beach) in the County of Huron are currently candidates under the Blue Flag international clean beach water quality program.

Huron County is currently developing a Natural Heritage strategy to enhance and protect natural heritage features in Huron County. One component of the strategy is developing comprehensive GIS data layers of the natural heritage resources in Huron County. These products, particularly the wetland layer, will help local conservation authorities and the Huron Stewardship Council to identify areas that should be reforested in order to improve forest health and to help improve water quality.

3.6.2 Land Use

The County of Huron will develop a Natural Heritage Plan that builds upon existing information and policies relating to natural heritage features, areas of local, regional and provincial significance and hazard lands. The plan will identify opportunities for linkages, restoration and enhancement.

The cutting of trees in the County is regulated by the County Forest Conservation By-law, which prohibits or regulates the destruction or injuring of trees in woodlands in the County of Huron. Municipalities can regulate tree cutting if they adopt a local tree cutting by-law.

3.6.3 Wildlife

Huron County is home to 6 endangered, 10 threatened, and 8 species of special concern. The County and Municipal Official Plans recognize that the preservation of wildlife species and native plants is important to maintaining biodiversity in the area and thus Environmental Impact Studies are required where development is proposed in or near natural features.

3.6.4 Huron Stewardship Council

The Huron Stewardship Council is a community based organization that is seeking to promote responsible resource stewardship through networking, cooperation and collaboration of efforts between various organizations and individuals in Huron County. The HSC focuses on promoting behavioural changes that support environmental stewardship by organizing activities that are carried out at the community level and involve direct contact and input from people in the community. The Huron Stewardship Council offers an opportunity for community input and involvement.

The Huron Stewardship council has developed a Lake Huron Stewardship Guide as well as a Rural Landowner Stewardship guide.

3.6.5 Solid Waste Management

Provincial and Municipal Policy Context

Residential waste management services provided by each municipality include curbside collection of garbage and recyclables. Municipal Official Plans indicate that the management of solid waste and recycling will be in accordance with best management practices and provincial regulations.

The County's role in waste management is determined by By-law 14-2001 which states how the County and municipalities plan and operate waste management facilities. The County's goal is to optimize the 12 active landfill capacities for the long-term needs of the area.

Waste reduction is promoted with a user pay garbage system. Each municipality decides the cost of garbage tags, and how the system will operate. The County provides additional waste reduction programs, including a year-round household hazardous waste (HHW) depot in order to divert HHW from entering landfills.

Waste Diversion Plan and Targets

Currently Huron County does not have established waste diversion targets. Research is underway by the County on measures to maximize waste diversion in future years.

Huron County has a permanent year-round Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Depot located in the Mid-Huron Landfill Site in Holmesville that is free to all Huron County households. Many municipalities also run a "WE" (waste electronics) program.

Recycling Programs

The Bluewater Recycling Association (BRA) services most of Huron County. The BRA has aided in a significant reduction in the amount of waste destined for local landfills. Recognized by the Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO), the BRA was presented with the Platinum Award in the category of exceptional efforts in Municipal Waste Reduction Achievement, wherein the per capita disposal of residential solid waste is reduced by 90% over the provincial average.

3.6.6 Air Quality, Climate Change, Pollution and Toxins

Go Green: Ontario's Action Plan on Climate Change is described as Ontario's *greenprint* for creating solutions to address climate change to foster a healthy environment and a strong economy. The five-point action plan includes: setting short, medium and long-term targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario; supporting green industry and business; promoting the use and development of green power; and, growing green.

The Huron County Health Unit reports on smog advisories and emergency room visits due to outdoor air pollution. Air quality monitoring is conducted by the province.

The Huron County Payment for Ecological Goods and Services (PEGS) Pilot Project, initiated in 2007, aims to establish healthy buffers on agricultural land to make the watershed more resilient to extreme rainfall events that accompany climate change. The pilot project introduces a model of providing annual financial payments to compensate for environmental services in the County and to evaluate the effectiveness of the model over a five-period to guide funding of future programs.

Policy directed in the PPS is to encourage and promote reduction, reuse and recycling objectives.

It is administered by the County of Huron and delivered by the Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authorities, in partnership with the Maitland Watershed Partnership Terrestrial Action Team, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Huron Stewardship Council.

A report on *Climate Trends in the Maitland Valley Watershed* in Huron County was recently prepared by Huron Geosciences that analyzed data from 1950 to 2006. It concluded that the total annual precipitation and intensity are increasing in the Maitland Valley Watershed, as well as temperature. Increases in annual precipitation and intensity may have a net benefit to natural systems while also having negative impacts on developed areas including increased potential for flooding and runoff and potential for erosion. Increases in temperature may lead to longer, more frequent heat waves, warmer winters, more frequent freeze/thaw cycles and their impact on road maintenance, and increased potential for bluff destabilization along the lakeshore, river valleys and gullies. These changes present serious challenges to flood forecasting systems, storm water management design criteria and rural storm water management.

3.7 Population

The Huron County population saw a 0.6% decline between 2001 and 2006, to 59,325. Despite the relative stability in overall numbers, the composition of Huron's population continues to undergo significant changes – specifically the age structure of the population. Huron County lost substantial portions of its youth (aged 19 years and older) and prime working age populations (25-44 years) between 2001 and 2006. As a result, Huron's population is disproportionately older at an average of 42.3 years, compared to the Ontario average of 39 years. As well, only 63.5% of the Huron County population is of working age, lower than the Ontario average of 68.3% (2006). The population density of Huron County is 17.5 people per square km with approximately 60% of residents living in rural areas (both farm and non-farm properties).

The Ontario Population Projections Update released by the Ministry of Finance (Spring 2010) estimate a population of approximately 60 800 in Huron County by 2031. Huron's existing urban centres contain an adequate supply of land to accommodate future growth, with the majority of growth to be directed towards Primary Settlement Areas. The municipalities of Bluewater, North Huron, and Howick have experienced modest population growth while other experienced slight declines.

For more information on the senior population, please refer to section 0.

3.7.1 Immigration

According to the 2006 Census, immigration numbers for Huron County are particularly low. The proportion of immigrants in Huron was 8% compared to 28% in Ontario as a whole. Additionally, a significantly smaller proportion of Huron County residents (1.5%) were visible minorities compared to Ontario at 22.8%

Community Vision for the Population:

In 2030, Huron County will sustain a moderate population growth with increased ethnic diversity by retaining current residents, welcoming new residents, and developing opportunities for youth, families and seniors.

The County of Huron Planning and Development Department is leading a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) project. The goal of the LIP, also known as “Make Huron Home”, is to develop a strategy that encourages and welcomes newcomers to the area. *An Immigration Strategy for Huron County*, released in March 2011, presents a set of recommendations for improving Huron County’s ability to attract and retain immigrants. Four key theme areas emerged in the development of the strategy: attracting newcomers to Huron; enhancing settlement services and programs; encouraging the inclusion of newcomers; and, communicating the benefits of a welcoming community.

3.7.2 Income and Poverty

In 2006, the median income of all private households in Huron County was \$51,910, approximately \$8,000 lower than Ontario. The unemployment rate was lower than the provincial average at 4.4% compared with 6.4% for Ontario as a whole. In 2006, 7.5% of Huron residents (over 4,000 persons) were considered to be living in the low income category, as defined by Statistics Canada. However, this percentage was lower than the 14.7% average for Ontario.

While Huron County experiences a lower incidence of low income than the rest of Ontario, certain barriers and obstacles related to low income are heightened in rural environments. For example, there are fewer employment and educational opportunities, fewer social services, barriers to access to affordable nutritional food, lack of transportation and lack of anonymity. The recent report completed by the Huron County Health Unit (HCHU), “Snapshot on Poverty in Huron County” (2007), suggested that in order to address the issues facing low income families, Huron County needs to continue providing equitable and accessible services and to continue provision of programs targeted to marginalized populations. For more on information on income and housing affordability, please see section 3.9.1. For more information on poverty and community services, please see section 3.9.7.

3.8 D o w n t o w n s

Huron County is currently undertaking a number of Community Improvement Plans (CIP). CIPs are intended to provide for the maintenance, rehabilitation and revitalization of residential and commercial areas, through developing an overall Plan for the area. The municipality of Goderich currently has a CIP, and as such has a downtown strategy. A Downtown Revitalization Coordinator was hired to provide guidance and resources for those in the business community who are interested in downtown revitalization. The County Senior Economic Development Officer and Business Development Coordinator provide guidance and help support the downtown revitalization efforts. Recent and current revitalization initiatives are taking place in a variety of places including Clinton, and Bayfield. One example is Main Streets Exeter, which aims to revitalize Exeter’s commercial district. Mixed-use development is officially encouraged in several Official Plans (e.g., Huron East, North Huron) and by the Community Improvement Plan in Goderich.

Community Vision for Downtowns:

In 2030, Downtowns in Huron County will be active and healthy centres of commerce, government and culture, capitalizing on historic character, locally-owned businesses, and people-friendly spaces.

3.8.1 Heritage Protection

There are a number of historically designated sites in Huron County's downtowns. These include the Village of Bayfield heritage district, Huron Historic Gaol, The Goderich Light House, and Goderich square, amongst many others. Zones that are designated as heritage, referred to as Heritage Conservation Districts, are subject to by-laws regulations that guide development in and around the districts.

Huron County also supports the Huron Heritage Fund project. This fund encourages the preservation of heritage assets and activities of heritage importance to the County of Huron and its residents. This fund aids projects that assist in the preservation and restoration of heritage landmarks, historic buildings, and objects of historical significance that are not owned by the County of Huron.

Currently Huron County is undertaking a cultural mapping project and will employ a cultural services coordinator to detail the cultural assets of the County.

3.9 Community Needs

3.9.1 Housing

Huron County had a total of 26,922 private dwellings, according to the 2006 Census. Single-detached houses, as a percentage of total occupied private dwellings, accounted for 84.5%, much higher than Ontario at 56.1%. Apartments, as a percentage of total occupied private dwellings, accounted for 9.7%, compared to 29.8% for Ontario. In 2006 Huron County had a total of 17 980 owned dwellings, 4 925 rented dwellings.

Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program (province wide) recognizes and agrees on the importance of increasing the supply of Affordable Housing. The recently revised Huron County official plan includes new targets for affordable housing in Huron County.

The 2006 County of Huron Housing Study, *Housing Demand and Supply Analysis*, identifies current population and household trends, income trends, housing supply, population and housing projections and housing needs/issues. The study concluded that due to projected population forecasts it will be important to ensure there will be sufficient housing options for seniors. As such, Huron County is currently building new affordable seniors centre housing. A wider variety of housing in urbanized areas was also recommended.

Social housing is provided by the Huron County Housing Authority. Housing is offered to the neediest households, including families, seniors, and low-income singles and couples. Rent is calculated as 30% of the individual or family's gross monthly income. There are 423 units available in Huron County. Sites are located across Huron County and when people cannot be accommodated they are generally referred to the private sector newspaper listings. Primary clients are low-income seniors and an

Community Vision for Community Needs:

In 2030, Huron County residents value and support community organizations and services which promote culture, diversity, recreation, education, entertainment, affordable housing and health.

A provincial interest identified in the *Planning Act* includes the adequate provision of a full range of housing. The PPS requires planning authorities to establish and implement minimum targets for the provision of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households.

increasing number of individuals with special needs particularly mental health issues. Goderich is also home to Huron County's Women's shelter.

Habitat for Humanity Huron County is a non-profit organization that aims to improve the lives of economically disadvantaged persons through home ownership, a basic human need. Through community support, Habitat for Humanity Huron County has successfully completed four builds and has plans for two more by the end of 2010.

Huron County does not currently have an abundance of new development and, therefore, any qualifying affordable housing comes through the resale market. Trends depict that when houses are for sale within Huron County, many of them do qualify in the affordable housing bracket.

The cost of adequate shelter should not exceed 30% of household income. Housing which costs less than this is considered affordable.

However, consumers, housing providers and advocacy organizations tend to use a broader definition of affordability.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2011)

3.9.2 Seniors

Nine Long Term Care Facilities operate in Huron County with a total of 642 beds, including the two County long-term senior residences: Huronview Home for the aged in Clinton and Huronlea Home for the aged in Brussels.

The Huron Community Access Program, operated by Huron County's libraries, has an easy-to-use online tool that provides a number of useful links targeted to Huron's senior population. The website has links to seniors to useful websites on topics such as support services, housing, and health care amongst others.

The 2004 report, *Times Change: A Snapshot of Huron County Seniors*, identifies key challenges for seniors and senior-focused assistance programs, including a lack of resources in the health and human services system that affects many of the determinants of health for seniors, and limited accessibility services in the County.

3.9.3 Public Safety

The Huron County Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) provides police services to the County, consisting of 80 officers.

The County Emergency Response Plan was prepared by Huron County's Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) and the Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee. Each municipality located in the County has their own Emergency Response Plan as mandated by Ontario's Emergency Management Act.

The Huron County EMS delivers medical care and ambulance services for the County with twelve vehicles coming from the four bases and three posts located throughout the area. The 52 full-time and 9 part-time paramedics respond to approximately 8,564 calls annually.

Local fire departments throughout Huron County also consist of volunteer firefighters. For example, the Central Huron Fire Department consists of 20 volunteer Firefighters and two auxiliary Firefighters.

A number of safety initiatives are available in the County, including PRISM (Protective Response Interactive Services Management), which is a county-wide emergency notification system used to notify the public during an emergency.

The County also provides a guide to Family Emergency Preparedness that outlines the process families should take to ensure they are prepared and able to respond to disasters.

In 2004, the County of Huron completed the Essential Level requirements of the province's Partnership toward Safer Communities program.

3.9.4 Communications

In 2007, Huron County received funding from *Rural Connections*, The Ontario Municipal Rural Broadband Partnership Program, to improve access to high-speed internet within the County. For more information on community internet access, please see the following section 0.

3.9.5 Education

Libraries

The Huron County Library (HCL) offers a variety of services, including children's programming, with an expanding scope and a commitment to program quality. The HCL has formed partnerships with other organizations, such as the Heritage and Culture Partnership (HCP), the Blyth Festival and the Village Bookshop. Program attendance for Huron County Library events totaled over 12,000 people at the 12 branch locations in 2009, not including attendance at other outreach at local schools and community events.

There are 12 library branches located throughout Huron County. In 2009, the annual circulation was 355,345, an increase of 22,000 from 2008.

To accommodate the transportation issues associated with service provision in a rural community, the library system offers a comprehensive van delivery service to transfer materials between branches four days a week. The Huron Community Access Program (CAP) offers free public access computers available at all 12 libraries to provide public access to online resources and allow them to improve their electronic skills. The HCL works with lower-tier municipalities to support libraries located in populated areas. The HCL mission statement reflects a commitment to supporting strong communities in Huron County:

The library is committed to building strong communities in Huron County by ensuring universal access to information for cultural, economic, educational and recreational development.

Huron County Libraries Strategic Plan was created in 2001. The Plan identifies goals, strategic directions and implementation tools. The four goals outlined in the Plan include:

- Ensuring the County Library has the infrastructure to deliver its services effectively
- Ensuring staff are capable of delivering the library services offered

- Managing library service delivery
- Ensuring enough funding is available

Formal Education

Educational attainment for residents in the County of Huron as of 2006: 31.5% have no certificate, diploma or degree, 27.8% have a high school certificate or equivalent, 10.4% have an apprenticeship of trades certificate or diploma, 20.0% have a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma, 2.3% have a university certificate or diploma below the bachelor level and 7.9% have a university certificate, diploma or degree.

There are 8 Catholic elementary schools and 19 public elementary schools in Huron County. Huron County is also home to 10 Mennonite Schools and 1 Christian School. A total of five high schools exist in Huron County, one is Catholic and the other four are public.

There are no formal post secondary institutions located in Huron County, but the Lake Huron Learning Collaborative (LHLC), REACH Centre, and Healthkick offers both credit and non-credit learning opportunities at a grassroots level through partnerships with neighbouring Universities and Colleges.

Teacher environmental education workshops are offered as a way of educating teachers on ways to green their classrooms. An example is the Lake Huron Environmental Teachers' Workshop, which introduces teachers to local environmental practitioners and provides them with examples of curriculum-based materials.

3.9.6 Youth

The total number of youth (under 30) in Huron County was 21 540 in 2006, 36.4% of the total population.

The first Huron County Youth Council has been formed, designed to provide input to Huron County Council on issues affecting youth in the area. In 2009 the Huron Business Development Corporation report outlined that the Huron County Youth Council benefited from the participation of 30 youth over the year.

The County contracted a Youth Engagement Coordinator in 2009 to develop ongoing communication with Huron youth to determine needs and create a youth-friendly community by ensuring appropriate programs are in place. In 2009, 2 438 Huron youth participated in Huron Business Development Corporation-supported youth skills initiatives, including:

- 2009 Career Symposium
- Lake Huron Watershed Youth Summit
- Youth Council
- Technology Skills Camp and Medquest
- HealthKick's Rural Healthcare Work Placement Program
- Engaging Huron's Youth in Arts & Culture Program

- Summer Company Program
- CED Youth Internship Program

A Huron County Youth Employment Research Project was conducted in 2010 in order to identify ways to preserve and enhance the growth of rural communities by making positive changes to the skills, employment and future plans of the youth in Huron County. A sample of grade 12 students was surveyed to learn the students' current skills, desire for future education and plans for place and type of employment in the future. Three main recommendations were made:

- Development of a student communication liaison position
- Further development of the creative economy
- Increasing practical experience

The Huron County community recognizes the importance of youth safety and health through the development of the Youth Resource Guide. The guide offers information and hotlines for a number of services in the County, including:

- Addiction services
- Support services
- Educational services
- Employment services
- Financial services
- Health services
- Housing and shelter services
- Legal services
- Transportation services
- Food and clothing services

3.9.7 Community Support Systems and Social Inclusion

Huron Addiction Services works across the County to provide alcohol, drug and gambling counseling services to over 425 people of all ages. Alcoholics Anonymous, Gambling Anonymous and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health provide 24-hour services.

The Community Living facility offers a variety of services and programs for people with developmental disabilities. The Huron Respite Network is another organization that caters to the developmentally disabled by providing emergency and planned respite for individuals with special needs.

Regional organizations, such as the Salvation Army, offer a variety of support programs for low income adults and children facing poverty. A number of food banks and church programs are also available throughout the County to assist with poverty. Food banks are located in Bayfield, Clinton, Exeter, Goderich, Seaforth, Wingham, and Zurich.

The Social Research and Planning Council is a subsidiary of the Huron-Perth United Way. It provides a public forum for social issues dialogue, identifies and prioritizes unmet needs and builds community capacity to address the identified needs.

Huron-Perth Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) staff work with clients around issues that address daily supports surrounding employment, hospitalization and discharge, and the development of social supports.

WOTCH Community Mental Health Services provides supported, permanent housing for individuals with serious psychiatric disabilities.

The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) conducted a Social Audit in March 2010 on rural poverty issues in Huron County. Three themes emerged: lack of public transportation, food security, and affordable housing.

Several services are available to the youth of Huron, such as the Big Brother Big Sisters program, and other community specific programs including Cubs/Beavers/Scouts and Sparks/Brownies/Girl Guides and Air Cadets.

The Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society employs 14 school-based social workers that are in place in the region's public schools. The school-based program allows workers to follow the CAS mandate but also to include attention to child welfare from a clinical preventive, proactive model.

The Huron County Health Unit worked with community partners to offer Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training workshops to caregivers on suicide intervention and prevention. Second Stage Housing and Counseling Services provide housing for women and children in Huron County who are victims of domestic violence.

ONE CARE Home & Community Support services provide a number of valuable services, including seniors-oriented programs. Services include Meals on Wheels, Adult Day Programs, In-Home Personal Support, Home Support, Home Help and Respite, Supportive Housing/Assisted Living, Safety and Reassurance Programs, Home At Last, Dining and Social Programs, Exercise and Wellness and EasyRide Transportation. Other services providers include the Alzheimer Society of Huron

As of June 2010, Huron County is a *211 Community. This is an information referral service that directs inquiries regarding human services that exist in the community and surrounding areas.

3.9.8 Arts

Huron County is home to a well represented arts community that includes a number of professional and community theatre companies. The Blyth Festival, one of Ontario's premier summer theatres, focuses exclusively on producing and developing contemporary Canadian Plays. The Goderich Little Theatre, based out of Livery Theatre in Goderich, is one of Canada's oldest community theatre groups at sixty years old.

The Youth Arts Festival, located at the Blyth Centre for the Arts, is one of the largest showcases of youth-driven visual arts, music, film, theatre and dance in one location. Among other theatre companies are the Gaibraid Theatre Company and Drayton Entertainment (operating out of the Huron County Playhouse). The economic impact of theatres in Huron County totaled over \$2 million in box office sales alone (2008).

The County of Huron is home to the collectively run Goderich Co-op Art Gallery and several art studios. The Huron County Art Bank collection, which is held in trust by the Huron County Museum for the benefit of the community, features contemporary works of art portraying Huron County produced by local artists. Each year an artist from outside Huron County chooses three pieces of art submitted to the Huron County Fine Art Show to become part of the Huron County Art Bank. The Huron County Art Bank currently does not have funding to sustain itself beyond 2012.

Established music scenes exist throughout the County; towns and villages offer free outdoor summer concert series, produced in conjunction with local organizations and businesses. Music events include the annual West Coast Bluesfest and the Kinsmen Summerfest, among others.

3.9.9 Culture and Heritage

The Huron County Cultural Plan, initiated by the Heritage and Culture Partnership in 2006 and published in 2008, outlines key cultural and heritage recommendations for the County. Recommendations include:

- Establish community arts collective
- Create a staff position in the County’s Cultural Services Department to support arts and culture activities
- Ensure enough funding to support Arts, Culture and Heritage Organizations
- Create performance opportunities for local musicians
- Undertake cultural mapping for the County
- Prepare a job board for volunteer positions with cultural organizations

Some of these initiatives have been realized by the volunteer organization with project and grant funding. The Huron Cultural Project has now become the Heritage Arts and Heritage Network and with one of the first initiatives focused on mapping cultural assets in Huron County.

The definition of **Culture**, as it relates to the Huron County Cultural Plan, includes the following categories:

- Arts – Performing (e.g.- music, theatre, dance), Literary (e.g.- writing, publishing, libraries), Media (e.g.- photography, film, video), Visual (e.g.-painting, drawing, sculpture, crafts), Design (e.g.- architecture, graphic, landscape)
- Heritage – Buildings and Structures (e.g.- monuments, buildings, structures), Resource Collections (e.g.- museums, archives, historical societies), Natural Heritage (e.g.- vistas, woodlots, lakeshore, valleys)

“A vibrant cultural scene generates economic activity, creates prosperous cultural industries and attracts major employers and new residents.

“We’re encouraging municipalities across Ontario to identify their cultural assets and use them to improve the economic, social and environmental health of their communities.”

Government of Ontario, Municipal Cultural Planning Brochure (2007)

The PPS indicates that significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved (Section 2.6).

- Social Culture – Community Festival and Events (e.g.- community celebrations, agricultural events, holiday celebrations)

The Heritage and Culture Partnership (HCP) was established in 2000 as an unincorporated, membership-based sub-committee of Huron County Tourism Association. The HCP provides information on Huron County’s visitor attractions, including: cultural sites, historical inns, museums and tours, theatre film and music. In 2010, the HCP became a not-for-profit incorporation known as the Huron Arts and Heritage Network.

Heritage

Huron County’s Official Plan states that heritage resources and archaeological sites will be identified, protected and enhanced under the Ontario Heritage Act. Areas of architectural or historical significance will be designated as Heritage Conservation Districts according to the Ontario Heritage Act. Huron County has four Designated Heritage Conservation Districts within its boundaries. Designated properties listed in the provincial heritage database include:

- Village of Bayfield, includes Main Street and Clan Gregor Square
- Main Street in Seaforth
- West Street in Goderich
- The Square in Goderich

The Huron County Historical Society discovers, collects and preserves historical information that relates to the discovery and settlement of Huron County.

There are a number of museums located in Huron County, including the Huron County Museum, which is responsible for the housing, preservation and exhibition of historic artifacts that represent the history of all County residents. The museum takes a leadership role in the conservation, promotion, interpretation and public education of Huron’s history. It maintains and operates three satellite locations:

- Huron Historic Gaol
- Marine Museum
- Sky Harbour Gallery

Huron County’s smaller museums and historic sites strive to preserve the regionally significant heritage of County communities. The following sites present heritage stories of smaller but equally important historical sites:

- The School Car on Wheels, in Clinton
- Van Egmond House, in Egmondville
- The North Huron Museum, in Wingham
- Seaforth and Area Museum

Several heritage/culture committees and societies exist in Huron County, advising Council on identifying, protecting, and preserving the town's historic assets, including:

- Bluewater Heritage Advisory Committee
- Heritage Goderich
- Goderich Marine Heritage Committee
- Brussels Heritage Committee
- Huron East Heritage Committee
- South Huron Heritage Committee
- Bayfield Historic Society
- St. Joseph's and Area Historic Society
- Huron Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society

Cultural Events and Activities

Huron County is home to many cultural events and activities each year. These events range from large cultural festivals, such as the Taste of Huron, to smaller farmers markets and crafts shows. Attendance events range from 70 to 25,000. Many of the events have received international and national recognition, including the Celtic Roots festival which has previously been named the best cultural event in Ontario. Other highlights in Huron County include the Doors Open Festival, Haunted Huron, Zurich Bean Festival and the Huron Pioneer Threshers and Hobby Show. The Huron County events and attractions bring in over 180,000 and 450,000 visitors, respectively, to the region each year. The events continue to provide a great way for the community to connect with greater Ontario and Canada.

3.10 Healthy Active Communities

3.10.1 Recreation and Leisure

The Huron County Health Unit and Take Heart Huron annually challenge area students, their families, and school staff to "Turn Off the Screens and Get *In Motion!*", where participants spend five days with little or no electronic device use and ninety minutes of daily exercise.

The Regional Equine & Agricultural Centre of Huron Inc. (REACH Huron) is a non-profit organization that offers innovative programming and recreational activities to support the equine and agricultural industries. Located in Clinton, REACH provides affordable (geared to income) and sometimes free programming.

The South Lake Huron Jumpstart Chapter, part of the Canadian Tire Jumpstart national charitable program, helps financially disadvantaged kids participate in organized sport and recreation. The local chapter helps raise funds, in partnership with other local non-profit organizations, to discreetly identify kids with the greatest need in the community. They then purchase recreation fees for children by helping to cover registration, equipment and/or transportation costs.

Community Vision for Healthy Active Communities:

In 2030...Huron County residents live active, healthy lifestyles with access to wellness services for mind and body.

Huron County has approximately 10.6 ha of open space per 1000 persons.

For more information on recreational and leisure as it relates to trails use, please see Section 3.3.3 on Active Transportation.

3.10.2 Health Care

Health promotion and prevention in Huron County is conducted by the Huron County Health Unit, covering active living, beach water quality, drinking water quality, food and nutrition services and disease control. The Officer of Health oversees the operation of the Health Unit.

The Huron County Health Unit promotes healthy living and nutrition by serving as an information resource to residents. The 2009 Community Health Status Report, produced by the Huron County Health Unit, provides information and statistics on a range of health-related topics, including mortality and morbidity. The report focuses on the overall health of County residents and compares Huron County's statistical findings with those of Ontario. The report on Healthy Weights identifies that, in 2008, there was a higher proportion of overweight and obesity in Huron County residents than healthy weights, and that the proportion was higher in men than in women.

In a similar report on Chronic Diseases, the prevalence of self-reported chronic diseases among Huron County residents was as follows:

- Over 30% have high blood pressure;
- Nearly 10% have asthma;
- Nearly 10% have diabetes; and,
- Nearly 20% have other chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer or thyroid disorder.

Huron County falls under the jurisdiction of the South West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). The LHIN works with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to support Ontario's health system goals. The South West LHIN three year Strategic Plan recognizes four priorities:

- Strengthening and improving primary health care
- Preventing and managing chronic illness
- Building linkages across the health care system for seniors/adults with specific needs
- Accessing the right services in the right location, at the right time and by the right provider

There are five hospitals located in Huron County: Clinton Public Hospital, South Huron Hospital, Alexandra Marine & General Hospital, Seaforth Community Hospital and Health Centre and Wingham & District Hospital.

HealthKick Huron is a campaign aimed at attracting new health-care professionals to live and work in rural Ontario. A few achievements from the campaign in 2009 include: the graduation of 20 practical nurses, the Pharmacy Technician training of 14 people and the continued training of 19 food service workers. The HealthKick Huron project has five key strategies:

- Rural Healthcare Exploration
- Rural Healthcare Work Placements
- Rural Healthcare Training Programs
- Rural Healthcare Experience
- Community Engagement

Members of the community in Huron County have created a rural research educational academic and teaching (GRREAT) centre, incorporated as the Gateway Rural Health Research Institute in Seaforth, Ontario. The mission of the centre is to organize and coordinate activities including operating community outreach programs, coordinating educational programs in rural health services and building a strong infrastructure for clinical research on rural health issues. A primary goal of the research institute is to encourage and support local investigators in all aspects of conducting research relevant to the rural population, from writing research proposals to preparing draft for publications.

The Huron-Perth Healthcare Alliance works in collaboration with the communities they serve in order to achieve quality care. As well, the Huron County Family Health Team (HcFHT) is a regional, patient-centred, primary health care team that provides collaborative health care.

The Huron Perth School Nutrition Partnership developed the “Eat & Learn” program, which seeks to make sure all children have access to healthy food in their school. The Partnership conducted a Huron Perth Healthy School Initiative that addresses the link between the health of students and their learning success with regards to healthy eating, physical activity, mental health, growth and development, bullying, substance abuse, etc.

3.10.3 Accessibility

Huron County has an Accessibility Advisory Committee (HCAAC) that provides advice to County Council on ways of removing barriers to access in the community. The Committee recommends and assists Huron in facilitating a barrier-free County.

PPS policies are supportive of improving accessibility for persons with disabilities and the elderly by removing and/or preventing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society.

C

Reflections and Next Steps

4 Reflections

4.1 Strategic Planning Analysis

A strategic analysis of Huron County is integral to the development of the priority areas and goals for each of the sustainability themes. Based on Steering Committee feedback and the current state conditions gleaned from the information and document review, the following set of strengths, challenges, opportunities and priority areas have been compiled. This list is meant to act as the starting point of discussion for establishing the goals, strategic objectives and actions (defined in the section 5).

4.1.1 Strengths

- Natural environment assets:
 - Lake, rivers, streams, vegetation, land, air and space
 - Over 100 km of coastline
 - Mineral rich soils
 - Stargazing ability
 - Maitland River (one of the best small mouth bass rivers in Ontario)
- Prime agricultural land; agriculture as key pillar of the economy
- Strong social capital for those that have a connection to the community
- Community hospitals (5)
- Ample volunteer opportunities for varying interests
- Strong support for seniors and people with disabilities
- Library system
- Employment and Learning Centres (5)
- Formal Economic Development Services department in Huron County and Huron Business Development Corporation
- Tourism as key pillar of the economy (continued tourism connected to the longevity of the lake)
- Part-time job opportunities; summer jobs for youth (strong tourism industry)

- Reasonable commuting distance to urban larger centres (London, Stratford, Waterloo)
- Bruce Nuclear (employment opportunity for Huron County residents)
- Substantial employers, including Hensall, Sifto Salt Mine, strong small businesses, enterprises
- Strong infrastructure: good roads, many walkable communities

4.1.2 Challenges

- Slight decline in population (Census periods 2001-2006)
- Changing population demographics
 - Aging population: increasing incidence of disabilities and increased need for transportation services; one of the highest percentages of seniors in Ontario
 - Dependant population growing
 - Workforce (and volunteer base) age group shrinking
 - Rural schools closing – may lead to smaller villages with less to offer newcomers than previously
- Environmental challenges (and impacts of Climate Change):
 - Reliance on oil in farming
 - Limited emphasis on composting at the local level
 - Soil erosion
 - Flooding (significant increases)
 - Ecosystem degradation
 - Water quality/aquatic health
- Balancing green energy generation and community concerns
- School board disconnect
- Isolation in rural areas; disconnected community
- Car dependency for everyday life
 - People commute out to work
 - 87% use automobiles for transportation choice
- Limited mental health facilities (especially for youth)
- Limited rental housing stock; wait lists for RGI County Housing
- Still recovering from recent plant closures
- Shortage in healthcare professionals
- Limited opportunities for university graduates (compared to urban centres)
- Job attainment difficulties for spouses; word-of-mouth job postings
- Possible disconnection between Employment and Learning Centres and employers

4.1.3 Opportunities

- Better emphasize Huron County as a small business Mecca
- Partnerships between organizations for long-term well-being
- Quality of life – market the small-town lifestyle and rich farmland
- Local Immigration Project and strategy development

- Telecommuting
- Local food and agriculture
- Emerging area for green industry (Midwestern Green Jobs Strategy, 2010)
- Post-secondary institutions
- Increased potential for tourism:
 - o Regional/local tourism
 - o 'Get-aways' and day trippers from Huron and nearby urban areas
 - o Agricultural and genealogical interest and local food tours
 - o 'Baby-boomer' population with interests in soft adventure trips
- Agricultural opportunities for individual rural landowners within Ontario's upcoming cap and trade market
- Transportation (regional transit): significant untapped demand within the County that could be better serviced

4.1.4 Priority Areas

Environmental priorities:

- Strategy for dealing with climate change issues
- Ecosystem restoration
- Tree planting on unfarmed land and along creeks and rivers
- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Reduce acreage of grass (lawns); encourage environmentally-friendly landscaping or plantings
- Community power generation (solar, etc.)

Community priorities:

- Welcoming community environment
- Community pride and ownership
- Continued funding for the arts
- Develop the next generation of community leaders
- Walkability
- Connections to service providers outside Huron County borders
- Enhanced mental health resources and public awareness
- Addressing (unseen) homelessness, affordable/accessible housing and seniors housing options

Economic priorities identified in EDO Blueprint:

- Agri-food and agri-business
- Manufacturing and industry
- Retail and service
- Tourism and hospitality
- Culture and the creative economy

Other economic priorities:

- Attract more families
- Attract youth educated in healthcare fields to return
- Encourage youth to consider college programs – emphasis on agriculture, small business and manufacturing

Infrastructure priorities:

- Walking and biking trails and active transportation (A coordinated body or stewardship council?)

5 Next Steps

5.1 Developing a Sustainability Plan

Take Action for Sustainable Huron provides the starting point for developing a comprehensive set of goals, strategies, and actions and, eventually, indicators, for the county-wide sustainability plan. The *Take Action* report identified community visions for each of the 10 themes (areas of focus) in the report. These themes have been highlighted beside each of the goal areas in Part B – Current Conditions. The intent of the report is to provide a collection of knowledge reflecting the current state of Huron County for the Steering Committee members to review and deliberate on in order to reach a consensus on desired future directions and on the indicators needed to measure objectives. The next step in this process is to establish a robust set of goals, strategies and actions for each goal area. The following section defines these elements and provides guidance for their conception.

FIGURE 3: FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING HURON COUNTY'S GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN.



COMMUNITY VISION

The **Community Visions** identified in *Take Action* represent a collective community goal statement or a common vision for the future of Huron County. The visions describe an ambitious and feasible situation for where Huron would like to be in 2030.

GOALS

The **Goals** represent the results that are needed in order to arrive at the situation outlined by the Community Vision. Each theme has one cohesive Goal. The Goals can be thought of as milestones, or as means to an end vision.

STRATEGIES

The **Strategies** are the specific results necessary to actualize the Goals in each theme area. In some cases, the Community Actions identified *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* reflect potential Strategies.

ACTIONS

The **Actions** are the individual steps essential to realize the Strategies. In some cases, the Community Actions identified *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* reflect potential Actions.



5.1.1 Performance Indicators and Monitoring Methods

While brainstorming and deliberating on the goals, strategies and actions, thought should also be given to the indicators for tracking their progress. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) identifies important considerations when developing indicators and methods of monitoring sustainability plans. The *Sustainability Planning Toolkit for Municipalities in Ontario* (AMO, 2008) states:

- Keep it simple - select only one or two key performance indicators per sector. If the indicators are very difficult to understand, they will not be used.
- Rely on existing municipal information tracking and reporting mechanisms where possible.
- Do periodic performance evaluations using the target based indicators and use the results to guide the monitoring process.
- Be flexible - as performance data become available and the municipality evolves the key sustainability indicators may need to change.
- Create partnership structures for implementation and internal management systems for municipal compliance.



Appendices

Appendix A: Information Review

PROVINCIAL DOCUMENTS

Greenbelt Plan, 2005
Places to Grow, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006
Green Energy Act, 2009
Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, 2010
Go Green: Ontario's Action Plan on Climate Change, 2007
Association of Municipalities of Ontario Climate Change Position Paper, 2010
Association of Municipalities of Ontario Sustainability Planning Toolkit for Municipalities in Ontario, 2008
Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan, 2011

Ministry of Municipal Affairs - Performance Measures

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