



East Algoma
Economic Development
Strategic Plan 



Economic Development Strategic Plan June 2012

Municipality of Huron Shores

Prepared by:



***Economic Development is an investment,
not a cost.***

List of Related Reports

East Algoma Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan
and
Economic Development Strategic Plan for the Town of Bruce Mines
Economic Development Strategic Plan for the Township of Johnson
Economic Development Strategic Plan for the Township of Plummer Additional
Economic Development Strategic Plan for the Town of Thessalon

The Consultants for this project were:



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A consortium of five municipalities in the East Algoma area, including Huron Shores, recognized a need for local Economic Development Strategic Plans. The intent is to derive Economic Development Strategic Plans for Huron Shores and each of the other four communities engaged in the project. At the same time, to look for economic development projects in which two or more of the five communities may participate.

Public involvement was the cornerstone of the project and the community was encouraged to participate. Further, the focus was on development from within the community, and not primarily the attraction of businesses to locate in the jurisdiction. The result built on the existing strengths of the community.

Community Values were established in a public workshop. These values serve as the outer boundary of acceptability for economic development. That is, while increasing local prosperity, the plans must not harm desirable community attributes.

Dozens of stakeholders in the community were consulted in depth to garner ideas and opportunities. The results of the consultations were very consistent and focused the plan on specific objectives.

Based upon the broad community input, the consultants developed strategic directions and specific recommendations. The very limited resources available to implement these plans were also taken into account. The end result is a practical and achievable plan.

The consultants recommend establishing a public-private sector Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) to help guide economic development activities in Huron Shores. The EDAC will also act as an additional resource to the efforts. Huron Shores had started creating an EDAC before this project was underway.

The Municipality should undertake an "Investment Readiness" self-test to better understand how they are positioned for economic development.

The Municipality is not marketed to tourists and there is nothing on the highway to suggest the attractions that may be of interest. Simple and inexpensive additions to signage on the highway, and then further directions to specific sites, will help tourists to learn what the municipality has to offer. The creation of events and festivals on a regular basis will help to refresh the appeal and draw visitors with a variety of interests.



Tourism also serves as the first stage in “people attraction”, which may lead to new residents living in the area. A “First Impressions Community Exchange” will provide an unbiased view of the community from an outside perspective. This will aid in upgrading and maintaining the look and feel of the community for visitors.

Value-added agricultural opportunities exist and the Municipality can encourage the local agricultural community to engage in these activities. The Rural Agricultural Innovation Network in Sault Ste. Marie can assist the local farmer and rancher to make progress here. These value-added opportunities may include a local organic food network, further processing of crops and livestock, farm tours and vacations and on-farm retail outlets. Linking and cross-promoting festivals and other events to the agricultural aspects, such as a farmers market, would increase the potential for economic benefit.

In support of these activities, it is recommended that a Community Improvement Plan be implemented for Iron Bridge. This is the only settlement of significance on the highway and the first impression of the Municipality that a tourist would gain when traveling westwards. Enforcing property standards would also improve the image of the area. New zoning by-laws must allow tourism establishments in shoreline areas, and unnecessary “red-tape” must be removed that may cause delays in development. The Municipality must also encourage the Province to become more engaged with lake capacity and local water quality concerns.

Despite severe restrictions on formal economic development resources, an effective combination of private sector volunteers, working with local officials and Council, can implement these recommendations over time. The need for an economic development resource for the region is described in the report “East Algoma Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan”, as well as regional activities, in which multiple communities may participate.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND PROJECT PROCESS

1.1 Introduction

A consortium of five municipalities in the East Algoma area recognized a need for Economic Development Strategic Plans. The five municipalities are:

- The Town of Bruce Mines
- The Municipality of Huron Shores
- The Township of Johnson
- The Township of Plummer Additional
- The Town of Thessalon

The intent of the project is to derive Economic Development Strategic Plans for each of the five communities engaged in the project. At the same time, to look for synergies in which two or more of the five can participate. Realistically, with the communities so close to each other, there will be many areas of commonality in the plans and opportunities for collaboration, but each can execute their own to the extent that they feel appropriate and able.

1.2 Municipality of Huron Shores

Huron Shores is located along the North Channel of Lake Huron in the Algoma District. The Municipality was created in 1999 through the amalgamation of the former townships of Thessalon, Thompson, and Day and Bright Additional, and the former Village of Iron Bridge.

The main communities in the Municipality are Iron Bridge, Sowerby and Little Rapids. Smaller communities include Ansonia, Day Mills, Dayton, Dean Lake, Eley, Livingstone, Livingstone Creek, Maple Ridge, Nestorville, Sherwood and Sunset Beach.

Tourist attractions include snowmobile trails, many pristine beaches and shoreline areas, nearby wilderness areas for hunting and fishing, and the Voyageur Hiking Trail which passes through Iron Bridge.

Data from the 2006 Statistics Canada Community Census indicates that 45% of the working population travel outside of the community for employment. Additional community data is shown in Section 2.0 of this report, "Community Economic Characteristics".

1.3 Critical Aspects of the Project As Defined by the Client Municipalities

There were very definite factors identified that the consultants were required to respect in the development of the project process. These were:

- While federal, provincial and regional initiatives can create a back-drop for economic development, local actions and initiatives are crucial in the actual implementation of economic development.
- Community involvement is the cornerstone of the project and the community must be encouraged to participate. This is especially important when establishing the parameters for local economic development, in the creation of ideas and potential initiatives and in validating the plan before finalization. The consultants designed and implemented a process to accomplish all three of these key requirements.
- The focus should not be primarily on the attraction of businesses to locate in those communities; rather, on the development from within the community.
- The result should build on the existing strengths of the community.
- Plans must recognize the lack of economic development resources available to the community.
- Understand that local volunteer resources will be a key factor in the ongoing execution of the plans.
- There will be many features in common between the five municipalities, especially with regards to the processes used to derive the plans. This is beneficial since it provides a common framework and “language” to permit different communities to work together.

1.4 Project Process Implemented

To meet these critical requirements, the consultants derived a project process that followed the phases shown below.

1.4.1 Phase One

The first phase had three main components. The first was to conduct introductory meetings with the Council and Staff of the Municipality. These meetings were to describe the proposed process in detail, learn of any concerns and to make refinements to the process based upon local knowledge. Second, a review was carried out of available existing reports and studies, such as:

- A review of current municipal activities in economic development
- Overview of activities and services undertaken by local and regional community organizations related to economic development.
- A review of existing documents to further the understanding of current directions and priorities, including:

- Official Plans
- Land Inventories
- Community Strategic Plans
- Community Improvement Plans
- Algoma Workforce Planning Board – Labour Market in Transition
- Algoma Workforce Planning Board – Industrial Analysis Report
- High Growth and declining industries and related occupations

Finally, and crucially, a Communications Plan was developed to describe how the community would be engaged and input solicited at various stages throughout the project. A mechanism was also established to encourage ongoing input and feedback from the community, using any means of communication preferred by the Respondent.

1.4.2 Phase Two

Phase Two saw the first consultation with the Community, and this focused on establishing two related guidelines for economic development:

Community Values

These are used to set the acceptable parameters for economic development, based upon the Values most important to the Community.

The Economic Development Mission

With the Community Values setting the acceptable limits for economic development, the Mission Statement was then derived.

Section 3.0 of this report, “Community Values and the Economic Development Mission”, describes the outcomes of this consultation process.

1.4.3 Phase Three

The third phase saw the single most extensive effort of the project, which lasted for three months. Undertaken were the dozens of one-on-one consultations with Stakeholders in the community, who had been identified for the consultants by jurisdiction Staff. Included in this list were those who had been active in previous efforts in the community, business people, societies, members of Council and those involved in economic development activities on a more regional basis. Also contacted were all members of the community who, as a result of executing the Communications Plan, had shown a desire to participate.

The extensive input provided in these consultations served several purposes:

1. It further promoted the entire process in the Community.

2. The consultants garnered ideas from the Respondents; although these are embryonic, in time they may develop further for economic development purposes.
3. It allowed consultants to identify potential “Champions”; that is, members of the Community who may be willing to devote some of their time and effort, on a volunteer basis, to assist the process of economic development.
4. The consultants were able to identify and confirm the recommended strategic thrusts of the report. The Respondents, for the very most part, were in agreement and supported these. This support will be vital when the time comes to invest in some of the ventures that will emerge.

However, the “double-edged sword” of such extensive community consultation is that it greatly raises expectations that something will now happen.

1.4.4 Phase Four

Phase Four was the development of the plan outline, describing the major thrusts that were recommended. As part of this process, multiple different sectors were considered, with many being discarded as not suitable for the community, based upon the identified strengths and weaknesses in economic development factors. More detailed information is provided in Section 5.0 of this report, “Recommendations” and in Section 6.0. relating specifically to land considerations.

This plan outline was reviewed with Council in order to obtain feedback, make refinements and gain agreement.

1.4.5 Phase Five

Phase Five, the final consultation, took the plan outline back to the community for comments and validation. Thereafter, the refined plan was finalized for formal approval by Council.

2.0 COMMUNITY ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

The following charts are extracted from the latest detailed data available, the Statistics Canada 2006 Census Community Profiles. When the 2011 Census Data is available (expected in late 2012 or early 2013) no dramatic shifts are anticipated.

2.1 Age Demographic

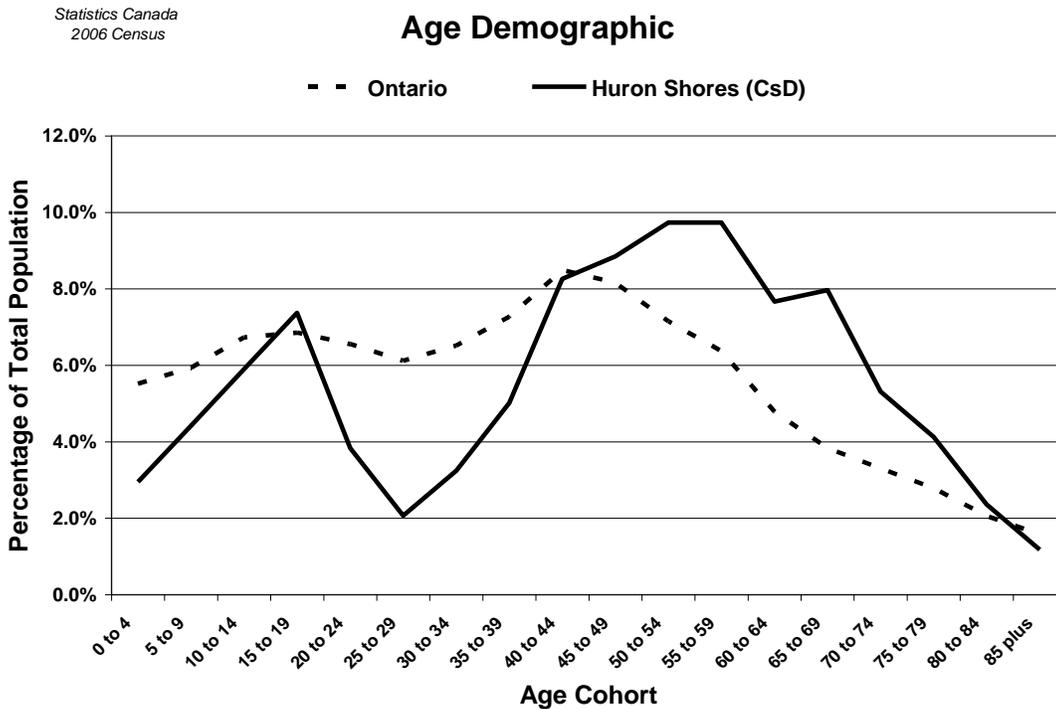


Figure 1 – Age Demographic

The Age Demographic has two significant attributes. In the age cohort 25 to 35 years of age, there are significantly fewer persons than is the average for Ontario and, in the older demographic, there are significantly more than the Ontario average. These results are typical of many communities that are smaller and more rural. This is indicative of younger workers leaving the area in search of work and older persons retiring in the community.

These attributes are not attractive to many companies, especially in smaller communities, since it shows a distinct lack of younger workers in the area.

2.2 Educational Attainment

The Educational Attainment shows that the percentage of the population with university qualifications is approximately half that of the Ontario average, with the percentage of the population without Grade XII at twice the Ontario average. The university level results are no different than the vast majority of communities outside of the GTA and communities with a main university located in their jurisdiction. The Grade XII result is very common to many rural and more remote, smaller communities.

Statistics Canada
2006 Census

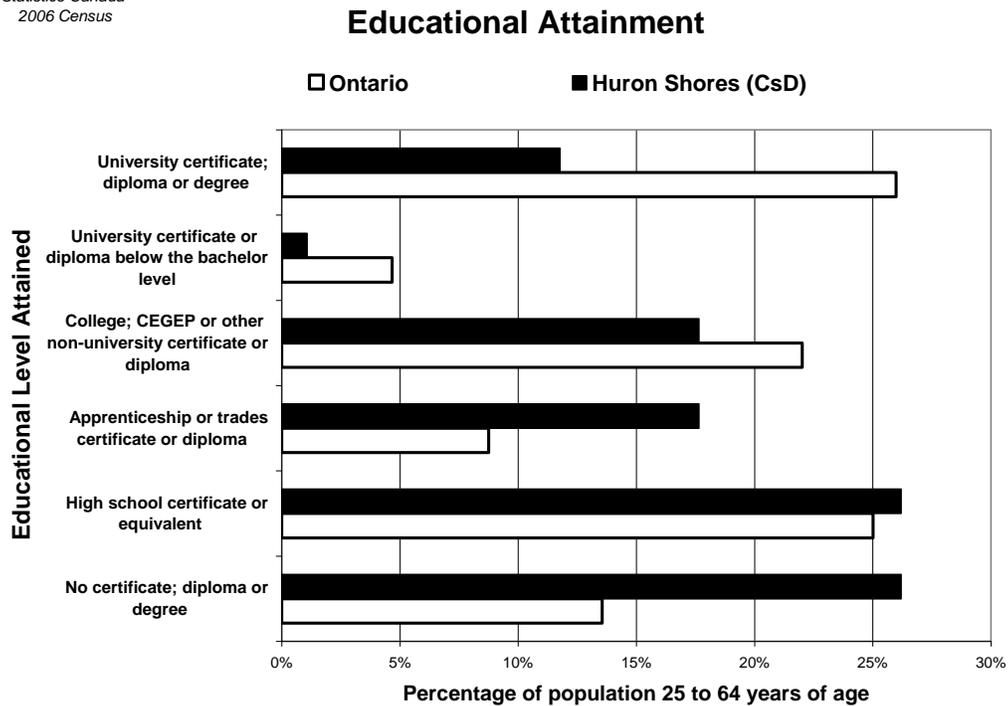


Figure 2 – Educational Attainment

These characteristics are not a reflection on the people of the community; rather, they reflect the lack of local jobs requiring higher levels of education, and that, in the past when the older population received their education, the imperative of achieving Grade XII was not thought to be as crucial as it is today. This is largely a legacy effect.

Some with apprentice/trades qualifications will travel to Sault Ste. Marie for employment.

The profile above is fairly neutral with respect to many types of employer; that is, they would find it to be quite normal in many rural communities.

2.3 Major Field of Study

Statistics Canada
2006 Census

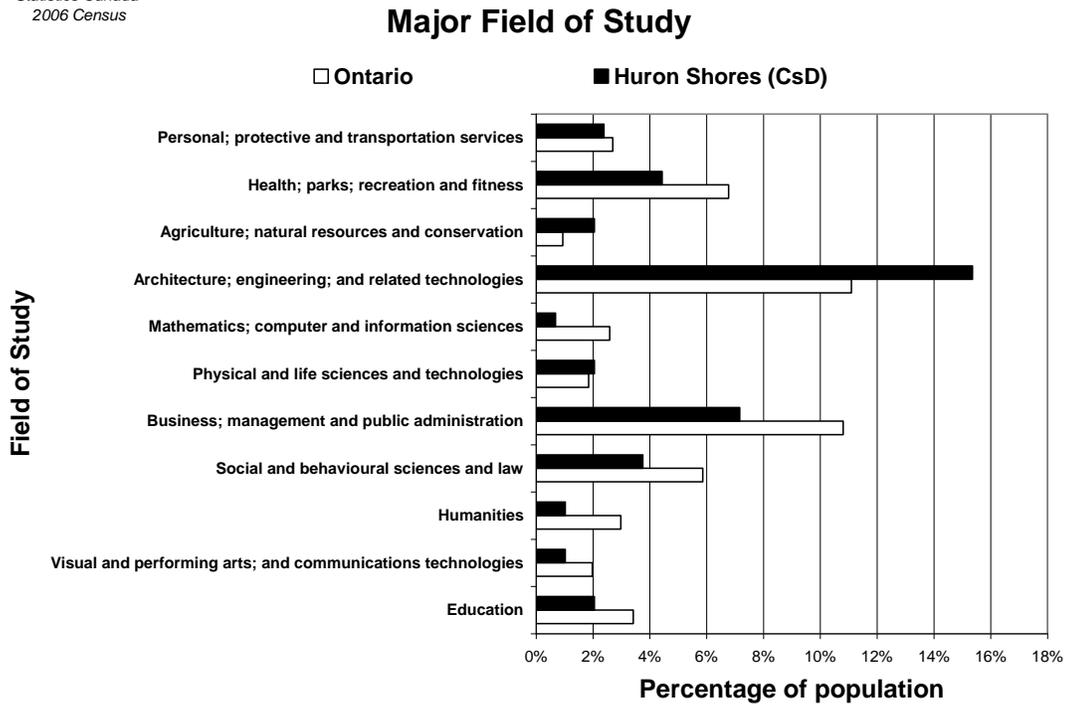


Figure 3 – Major Field of Study

Apart from a large number of persons in the architectural and related disciplines, and a lower number in business, there is little of note, advantageous or otherwise, in the Major Field of Study profile.

2.4 Employment by Industry

The results show in which industries the population work, and not where those jobs are located. The results are quite typical of the Ontario average, indicating a reasonable balance. As would be expected, agriculture has a much higher percentage than average. Some manufacturing jobs are located in Sault. Ste. Marie, and this explains why the percentage is close to the Provincial average, despite the relative lack of many manufacturing opportunities in the community.

Statistics Canada
2006 Census

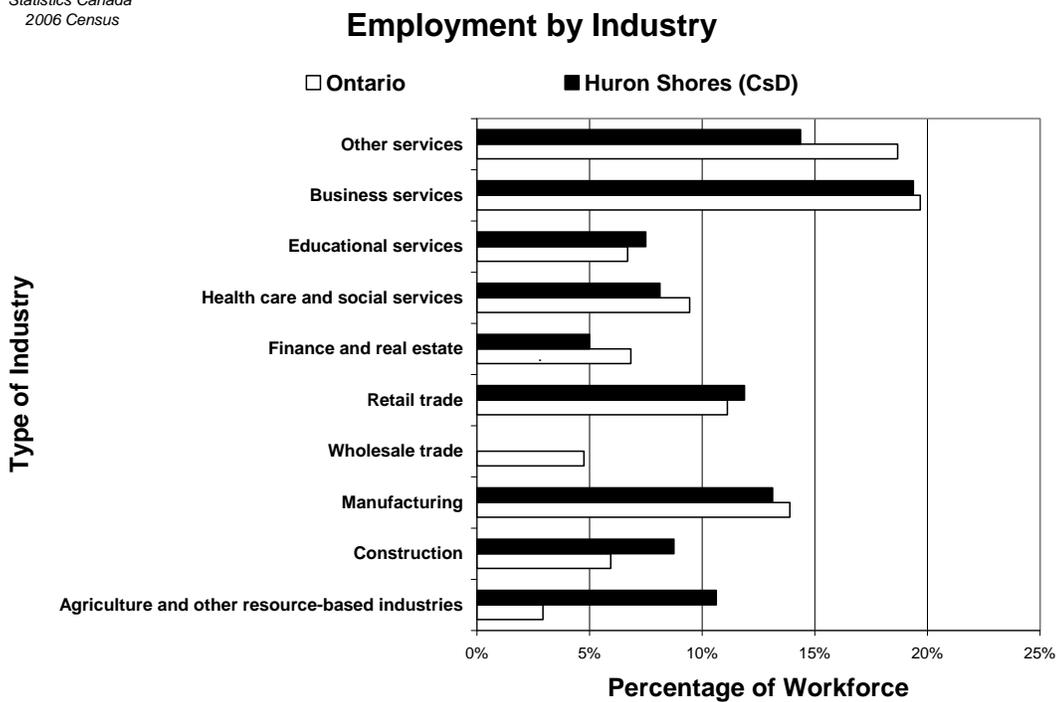


Figure 4 – Employment by Industry

3.0 COMMUNITY VALUES AND THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MISSION

The development of an economy should reflect the Values of the Community. That is, it should increase the overall prosperity, but not at the cost of harming those aspects of the Community that are held most dear.

These “Made in the Community” Values were derived through a Community Workshop (in Project Phase Two), through one-on-one consultations and correspondence. Throughout the project there were ongoing opportunities to provide feedback and information via the community website and direct contact with the consultants. Dozens of participants provided feedback throughout the project.

The outcomes of this workshop were reproduced, word-for-word, and published on the municipal web-site. Appendix II of this report contains these same details.

From this body of input, the Values of the Community were summarized as:

- Avoiding, minimizing or mitigating further impacts to all aspects of the natural environment
- Maintaining the individual and unique nature of the Community
- Keeping taxes as low as possible, consistent with the desired level of service

Using these Values, the Mission Statement for Huron Shores Economic Development is:

The Huron Shores Economic Development Mission is to enhance prosperity in the Community. Key strategies will focus on:

- Well-paying and enduring employment opportunities
- Encouraging diverse, value-added and appropriate industries to locate in the Community
- Agriculture as a key component

The Mission will respect the dearly held Values of the Community, most especially:

- Avoiding, minimizing or mitigating further impacts to all aspects of the natural environment
- Maintaining the individual and unique nature of the Community
- Keeping taxes as low as possible, consistent with the desired level of service

4.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS TO SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MISSION

4.1 Economic Drivers and Re-distributors

'Drivers' and 'Re-distributors' of prosperity in an economy are both necessary. The Drivers bring in wealth, and the Re-distributors circulate much of this wealth within the economy.

'Manufacturing' is the production of goods which are then sold outside of the community for which the company and workers receive money, which is then spent, for the most part, within the community.

'Exported Services' is the provision of services to those outside of the community for which the company and workers receive money, which is then spent, for the most part, within the community.

'Agriculture' is the production of agricultural goods which are

then sold outside of the community for which the farmers receive money, which is then spent, for the most part, within the community.

'Tourism' is the attraction of people from outside the community, who then spend money within the community.

Retail, local construction and local services create the essential re-distribution of the wealth generated by the above four economic Drivers. In general, such Re-distributor elements will follow the growth of the local population. Having a growing and increasingly prosperous population is the best manner by which to stimulate growth in these "re-distributor industries".

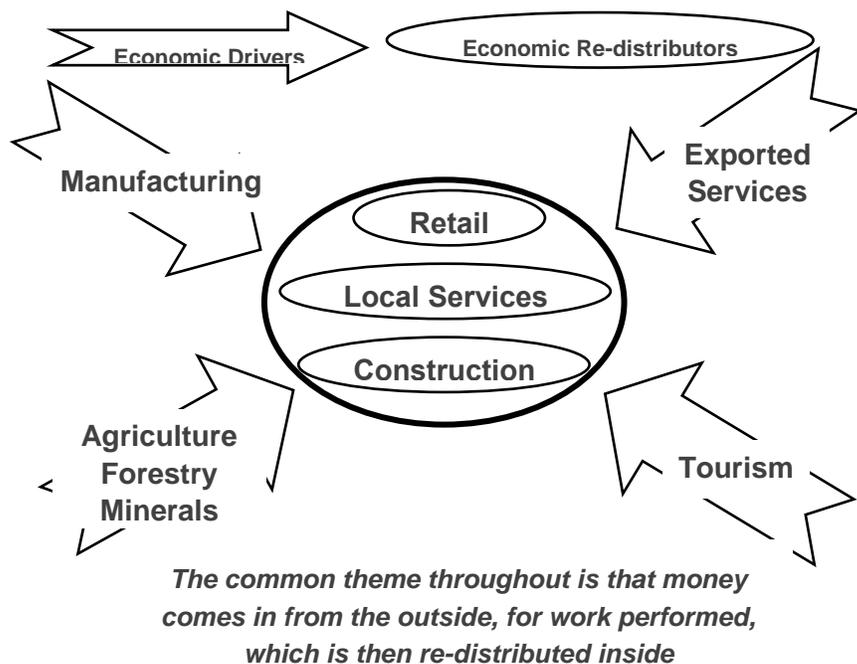
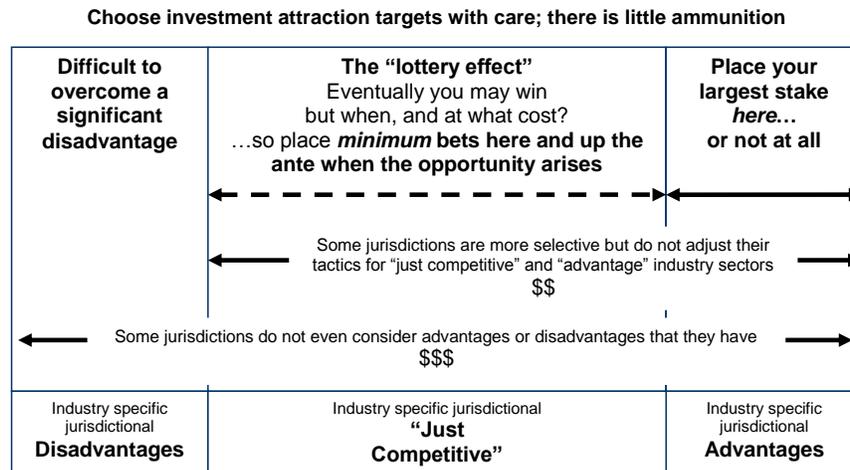


Figure 5 – Economic Drivers and Re-Distributors

4.2 The Active and Alert Strategies for Investment Attraction

“Having an advantage” is much more than “being competitive”. What does “competitive” really mean and how do misconceptions sometimes cause jurisdictions to spend money trying to attract investment when they have little hope in succeeding due to these efforts alone?



These factors can vary greatly from one industry to the next...each must be assessed

Figure 6 – Investment attraction factors

The most obvious example is a foot race. All of the participants will, in general, be competitive; that is, they have some chance of winning. Yet, all else being equal on a given day, the competitor with an advantage will win. There will be many sectors in which the jurisdiction is “just competitive”, and it is very tempting to focus on all of these. Only where strengths align with economic demands will an opportunity be created that can be pursued vigorously.

Being competitive is not the same as winning. It is a buyer’s market in that there are usually far fewer opportunities than jurisdictions wanting those opportunities. So only the “demonstrably best” are likely to win. The clear separation of “advantages” from “just competitive” factors is essential for an effective, yet efficient, campaign.

As shown in Figure 6, the difference between Active and Alert Strategies is conceptually simple; applying the distinction can make a significant difference to the effective utilization of scarce investment attraction resources.

In the Active Strategy, the tangible advantages of the jurisdiction are used to create a positive investment attraction business case that should be taken to the potential investor market. This is where many of the resources available for investment attraction should be devoted since there are demonstrable advantages compared to other jurisdictions, which can be used to attract the prospect through differentiation.

In the case of the Alert Strategy, less resources should be invested in non-targeted sectors but be ready to act with as much vigour as in the Active Strategy, should the opportunity arise. This will happen from time to time (the “lottery effect”) since the area may be competitive in several industries and should receive a fair portion of the attention from prospective investors.

Thus the significant difference between the Active and Alert Strategies is in how the prospect is uncovered. In the case of the Active Strategy the prospect is actively sought with resources applied, since the chances for success are highest. In the case of the Alert Strategy, the prospect is identified when they “come along”. Relatively little effort is applied to find them, since the area cannot readily differentiate itself from other jurisdictions, and has a lesser chance of a successful active campaign.

For the resource limited jurisdiction, the clear separation of ‘advantages’ from ‘just competitive’ factors is essential.

4.3 Strategic Thrusts NOT Recommended, with a Rationale (The Alert Strategy)

By this we mean that the community should not invest in pursuing these actively (Active Strategy) with scarce resources and funds. The rewards are likely to be too few, and too far between, to make this worthwhile.

It is possible that such opportunities may arise spontaneously (Alert Strategy); in that event, every effort should be made to encourage it, within the boundaries of acceptability of the Community Values.

4.3.1 Manufacturing

No advantages are present in the area for the general manufacturer and the distances to major markets are a potential detriment.

The cost/reward imbalance is too great to pursue when economic development resources are scarce.

4.3.2 Exported Services (Call Centres, Headquarters, Etc)

A company headquarters is unlikely to select East Algoma as a location, unless a resource-based enterprise that must be so located due to the raw materials in the area.

Call centres (incoming and outgoing) generally seek areas of relatively high and chronic unemployment amongst plentiful younger workers. Youth tend to migrate away from East Algoma in search of jobs and the age demographic demonstrates this.

4.3.3 Mining

Requires the private sector prospector to drive this and it cannot be readily encouraged by community efforts.

4.3.4 Forestry

The industry is in a continuing slump and, with highly automated post-harvesting processes, fewer and fewer jobs are being created. Existing mills in the area have been looking for value-added opportunities.

4.4 Strategic Thrusts Recommended (the Active Strategy)

Each is expanded in Section 5.0 of this report, “Recommendations”. For regional initiatives, please see the related report “East Algoma Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan”.

4.4.1 Form a Public-Private Sector Economic Development Advisory Committee

This is a most effective means to link the private and public sector, as well as provide additional resources to aid in economic development.

4.4.2 Conduct an Investment Readiness Test

This “self-test” is an excellent method by which to learn more about the community and its preparedness for economic development.

4.4.3 Tourism

This seemed to be a common theme in Stakeholder discussions. The enthusiasm ranged from mildly positive to very positive regarding making this a major element of the plans.

Some coordination effort will be necessary. The recommendation with respect to a “Regional EDO” will address this.

4.4.4 Agriculture and Agri-food Value-Added

This is a clear opportunity for those jurisdictions with a significant agricultural component, while those without such land may be ideal locations for further processing operations. Moving away from the primary phases of agricultural production into more value-added activities is the key. Some local farmers are doing this already and others seem willing to take a first step.

4.5 Adapting the Plans Over Time

The rate of change in the economy is now faster than it has ever been, requiring adaptable strategies, with the ability to make necessary adjustments as the economy changes and evolves. New challenges and new opportunities will emerge, both requiring a flexible and adaptable approach. It is vital that all plans be reviewed, on at least an annual basis, or after a major economic change occurs. The “Great Recession” of 2008 is an example of the latter. The validity of all plans and actions must be given consideration at such a review, and adapted to meet any changes in the economic environment.

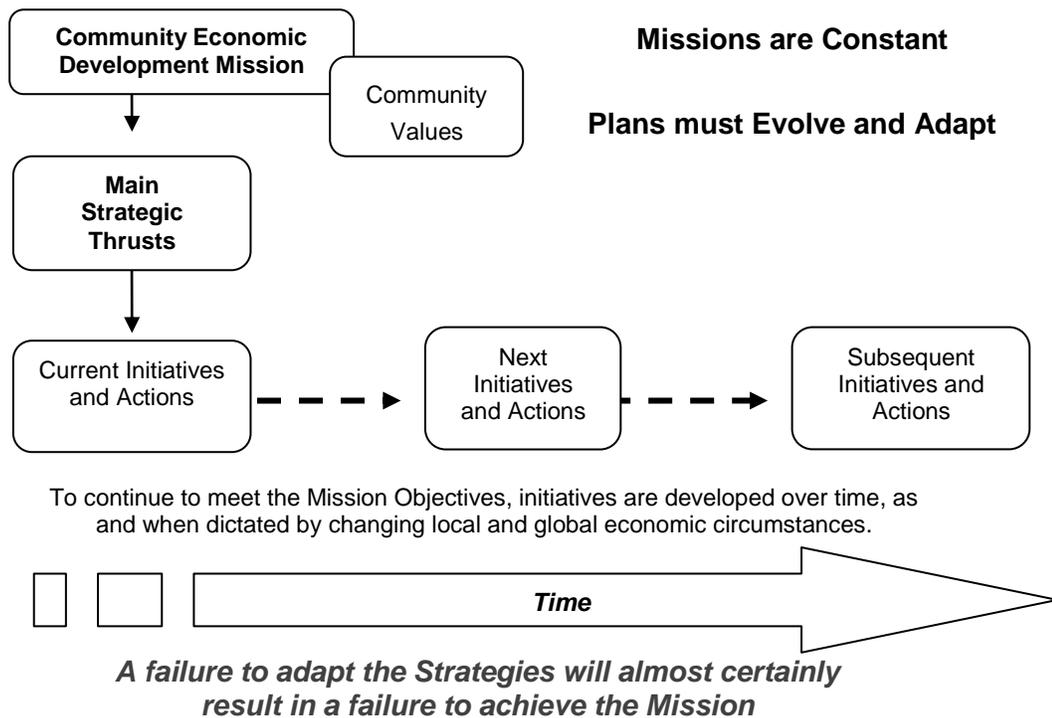


Figure 7 – Missions are Constant Plan must Evolve and Adapt

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the specific recommendations to support the strategic thrusts identified in the preceding section.

In creating these recommendations, the consultants have taken into account that the Municipality has not recently undertaken formal economic development activities. Also, while volunteer “Champions” have emerged from the community, there are no paid economic development resources currently engaged, with severe budget limitations also identified.

5.1 Recommendation #1: Form an Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)

An Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) is being formed by the Council of Huron Shores. A public-private sector EDAC is an excellent interface between the community “Champions” and the Municipality. It can also be the first “gate” to rinse through initiatives that may be brought to the attention of Councils.

We recommend that there be between 6 and 10 members of the EDAC, with a ratio of at least two private sector members for each Council member. The Chair should be from the private sector. Staff

should act as support for the EDAC. The EDAC should participate in the Investment Readiness Test (see Recommendation #2, below) and focus actively on Tourism Development initially. Opportunities may also arise to assist in the agri-value added opportunities.



Figure 8 – An Economic Development Advisory Committee

5.2 Recommendation #2: Conduct an Investment Readiness Test Self-Assessment

We recommend the following, “The Investment Readiness Test: A Self-Assessment Tool for Northern Ontario Communities”. This was developed specifically for Northern Ontario communities, and may be downloaded at:

http://www.mndmf.gov.on.ca/northern_development/documents/go_north/investment_readiness_test_e.pdf

The Investment Readiness Test is of particular importance to communities that are venturing into formal economic development for the first time. Many experienced communities also take this assessment on a refresher basis, in order to ensure that they maintain currency and are not drifting off course.

It is vital that the test be self-administered. This permits the community to judge itself against the various criteria. Being judged by others may lead to a defensive posture.

Not all aspects will apply equally to all communities, especially the smaller ones with limited resources. It will provide as much guidance for improving investment readiness as it will to identify where economic development efforts may prove to be less fruitful. This is extremely valuable so that precious resources are directed to the most likely avenues for success.

5.3 Recommendation #3: Tourism and People Attraction

In itself, Tourism provides direct benefits to operators and all businesses that service the needs of visitors. In a broader sense, it is the Advanced Guard of People Attraction, which may lead to the attraction of:

- Younger families
- Retirees
- Entrepreneurs who may start businesses

The entire region is one of pristine beauty that has appeal to many different people. Using these characteristics to attract tourists is one avenue of opportunity. Beyond that, if people think that it is a nice place to visit, then they may also think of it as a nice place to live. Every effort made to attract the visitor also enhances economic development.

Alone, the community does not have sufficient to offer potential tourists to cause people to visit. Collectively, with other municipalities, a more compelling case may be made. Much of the effort here is recommended to be taken under the auspices of a regional plan. Please see the East Algoma Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan for details on these recommendations.

5.3.1 Tourism Challenges

Tourism operators must be responsive to the changing wants and needs of the tourist and these vary across demographics, economic conditions, and so on.

Some of the unique challenges in tourism development are:

- The target market is more difficult to define because it is subject to changing trends and, generally, may include some or all of:

- Skiers and Hikers.
- Fishermen.
- Shoppers.
- Sports Teams and Spectators.
- Meetings/Conference attendees and their spouses.
- Bus Tour Participants.
- Overseas Business Visitors.
- Overseas Package Tour Participants.
- Educational Tour Participants.
- Work Crews.
- Business Travelers.
- Day-trippers (from nearby urban centres).
- Ecotourism/adventure/agri-tourism participants.
- The seasonality of demand. Peaks and troughs; high and low seasons.
- The weather. Weather is always unpredictable.
- The varying expectations of consumers.
- Longer-term market development. Very few new tourism businesses achieve maximum capacity usage in the first years of start-up.
- High fixed costs. Many tourism businesses have a high fixed cost component.
- Co-operative nature of competition. Because tourism businesses are often located in a tourism destination region, they often work collaboratively to promote their destination.
- Single use nature of assets. Accommodation facilities in particular have limited alternative uses for the asset.
- Highly capital intensive. Many tourism businesses require a large up-front capital investment.

Further, the following specifics will also affect tourism development strategies for each potential target market:

- Who they are (age, income, marital status, education and lifestyle patterns)?
- How many are expected?
- What interests them?
- Where they come from?
- Why they travel?
- When they travel?
- How often they travel?
- How they travel?
- How they spend their money?

- How price-sensitive they are?

Much research has been conducted for Northern Ontario and information may be found in the following document: “Five-Year Tourism Marketing Strategy 2008-2012” found at:
http://www.connectionnorth.ca/uploads/documents/Northern%20Strategy%20FINALLR_Jan09.pdf

One emerging, and very large, market can be accessed indirectly through the targeting of diverse, ethnic communities within the domestic market. Some of Ontario’s ethnic communities are quite large and have the capacity to stimulate tourism activity by exploring Ontario themselves, and by acting as hosts to family visiting from their home country. As the middle class in countries such as China and India grows, the demand for tourism will grow. Family/friends in Ontario can help encourage travel to areas in the Province that they themselves have enjoyed. In turn, these overseas visitors may then become so attracted that they will consider the area for settlement, if they later emigrate from their current homeland.

More recommendations are included in the separate report “East Algoma Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan”. Individually, the Municipality should address the following:

5.3.2 Recommendation #3a: Conduct a “First Impressions Community Exchange”

First Impressions Community Exchange: <http://www.reddi.gov.on.ca/firstimpressions.htm>

Most communities want to provide a positive first impression to visitors who may be:

- A tourist
- A potential resident
- A potential business investor

All can be important contributors to the local economy, immediately and in the future. It is paramount that their first visit become one of many, rather than the last one that they will choose to make. Their experience while in the community will make that difference.

Much of the following is extracted directly from the above Government of Ontario website.

As a resident, it may be difficult to assess your own community objectively, because you are too familiar with it. You may overlook positive attributes that might attract someone to your community, as well as attributes that may seem unattractive or problematic for someone new to the community.

The First Impressions Community Exchange is beneficial to communities that are developing a vision and plan for the future, because it offers a fresh perspective on their community – an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses through a new set of eyes. Your community can then use the recommendations from the exchange community's report to develop action plans to build on local strengths, and address local weaknesses.

The First Impressions Community Exchange is a process intended to reveal the first impression a community conveys to outsiders, including tourists, potential investors and retirees. It offers a fresh perspective on the community's appearance, services and infrastructure and helps communities learn about their strengths and shortcomings.

Volunteer "visiting teams" from two exchange communities do unannounced, incognito visits, record their observations, and give constructive feedback to their exchange community. The knowledge gained through a First Impressions Community Exchange can be the basis for positive community action, focused on downtown revitalization, tourism development, investment attraction, quality service improvement, or broader community strategic planning efforts."

Each visiting team is made up of 5-6 exchange community residents with a mix of backgrounds, occupations, ages, etc. It is important to have a diverse group of volunteers who can assume different roles and assess the exchange community from a variety of perspectives.

The team travels together to the exchange community and spend several hours gathering information. The team then prepares a report and presents it to the exchange community. The exchange community reciprocates with a similar visit and report-back.

In Northern Ontario, the program can be accessed via the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry local contact.

5.3.3 Recommendation #3b: Inventory and Improve the Condition of Attractions

Not only should the attractions and points of interest be inventoried, they must be brought up to a standard that will best meet the expectations of the tourist. This includes interpretive plaques at the site, adequate parking and so on.

5.3.4 Recommendation #3c: Improve Signage

Nothing on the highway indicates that the community has attractions. This is presently a lost opportunity that can be remedied at low cost.

Attractive highway signage is essential. Regional branding is recommended, together with the specific attributes of the community.

Once in the community, nothing creates a more frustrating experience for the visitor than being unable to find the various points of interest. Excellent signage within the community limits is essential to prevent this frustration.

5.3.5 Recommendation #3d: Create events and festivals

Apart from the inherent beauty of the area, events and festivals offer the best opportunity to develop inducements to visit, and which can vary in order to attract a wide range of visitors. Events and festivals also leave no permanent impact on the community, since they are “put up and then taken down”.

It is essential that the events and festivals are compatible with the overall feel and image of the area. They should also be appealing to residents as well as visitors. Promoting a Farmers’ Market alongside these regular events can help both to thrive. The local arts community can also play a valuable role in attracting visitors.

It is also important to coordinate with other communities to ensure that events do not conflict and are compatible with one another.

5.4 Recommendation #4: Develop Agri-Value Added Activities in the Community

There are two main elements to this recommendation.

5.4.1 Recommendation #4a: Encourage and Support Agri-Value Added Activities in the Community

This is an effective way forward for many farm operations. Some examples of agri-value added opportunities are:

- A local organic food network
- The creation of the area as a “local food virtual agricultural supermarket”
- The “100 mile diet”
- Instead of raising cattle and selling them before finishing, finish them locally and then custom slaughter/cut for retail and restaurants
- Regional branding of products
- Cut out some of the “middle-men” between the producer and the consumer; the extra work is rewarded with extra profit
- Instead of selling a cash crop, further processing it
- Farm tours - these are much more easily implemented on the smaller farms rather than larger enterprises
- On-farm retail outlets

- Farm vacations
- ...and so on

There is also an opportunity to create a network of complimentary agricultural and agri-food operations. These will be an attraction for visitors, as well as supporting the farmers that operate these businesses. This is sometimes referred to as agri-tourism. Agri-tourism finds its roots in the Italian term “agritourismo” — the concept of bringing urban residents to farming areas for recreation and spending.

Linking tourist industry festivals and other events to the agricultural aspects, with cross-promotion, would increase the potential for economic benefit.

Moving into the value-added arena is not a complex process; yet it is not easy. There are definite requirements and a step-by-step process is vital. The appendices to the report “East Algoma Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan” describe in more detail some aspects of value-adding in the agricultural and agri-food sector. Some of the main points are:

- The farmer/rancher must become “entrepreneurial”. This is not a given since less than 2% of the population are thought to have this trait. Most farmers are self-employed, but this is not the same as being entrepreneurial.
- New aspects of doing business must be learned, many of which may not have been faced before. Part of this is a candid self-assessment of the real abilities of the farmer. It is not wise to assume that the farmer has all of the knowledge and abilities in new fields, such as marketing, process development or finance.
- Consumer-focused thinking is absolutely essential; not trying to sell what they grow, but growing (and processing) what will sell.
- A preparedness to invest time and money, for several years. Anecdotally, value-added agricultural operations may take five or six years to break-even. Also, the time invested cannot be at the expense of the existing farm operation, since that is the only producer of dollars needed for living, and to finance the early days of the new venture.
- Risk-taking is inherent in the process of value-adding. “Non-successes” along the way are inevitable but they can be learning processes instead of disasters. The key is “not to bet the farm”. Instead, to develop a plan, and to move forward in small steps, at all times risking only what the farmer can afford.

The main role of the Municipality will be to encourage and support the local agricultural operations that are moving into value-added products. Also, to respond quickly to remove unintended road-blocks. Some activities might require minor amendments to by-laws or legislative amendments to land usage. The key is to promote development and growth that are not incongruent with the intent of the legislation, and to maintain and enhance the agrarian characteristics that are the very basis for the attractiveness.

An inventory of farming operations, what they produce, their future plans and their amenability to the value-added opportunities would be valuable. Potential joint activities may then become apparent.

A coordination resource for agri-value added activities is covered next, under Recommendation 5b.

5.4.2 Recommendation #4b: Work with the Rural Agricultural Innovation Network (RAIN)

Coordination and leadership will be needed to develop and maintain agri-value added activities. The Rural Agricultural Innovation Network, in Sault Ste. Marie, can take on this role. RAIN can be the mentor and technical aid for the agricultural community wishing to develop value-added opportunities. Respondents to this project supported and welcomed the involvement of RAIN in this aspect of the strategic plans.

Another challenge will be to provide some education to the farm community in value-adding, and dealing effectively with the inherent risks. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, OMAFRA, provides a training course for these crucial issues.

RAIN identifies some of the challenges to successful value-added agriculture:

- Lack of funding incentives and/or time consuming and onerous funding application systems, many of which are not well coordinated as to requirements.
- Lack of support for operational funding requirements for organizations that work in support of the value chain.
- Lack of infrastructure.
- Inadequate business skills among entrepreneurs and producers.
- Poor food and non-food product distribution systems.
- Lack of market development skills.
- The need for greater consumer acceptance and take up.
- Poor knowledge among investors and entrepreneurs outside Algoma of the potential for the local agri-business value chain.

RAIN has some recommendations for Municipalities regarding assisting in value-added agriculture, and they can advise and help on effective methods. Some of these are:

- Increase the amount of pertinent municipal information to agri-business owners.
- Collectively market the value and potential of land and agri-business opportunities in Algoma to external interests, investors, new farmers, agri-forestry and other interests.

- In some cases, municipalities can act as lead applicant and/or provide administration services for funding applications, internships etc. on behalf of local entrepreneurs, co-operatives and innovators.
- Become more aggressive advocates in support of policies, regulatory reform, programs and funding from provincial and federal governments that support rural economic development.
- Municipalities should adopt buy local policies if these are not already in place, and encourage others to do the same.
- Lobby as a strong unified voice for significant, cost effective improvements to wireless and high speed internet services. Rural businesses require a level playing field.
- Municipalities can support the development of agri-tourism through the RAIN and other agencies such as the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance and the Northern Ontario Regional Tourism Organization. As a partnership between farmers, restaurants, B&Bs and lodges, agri-tourism activities include facilitating closer relationships between operators, farmers and chefs through events, driving routes and farm stays.
- Support partnerships that could work with Central Algoma Secondary School and the Algoma District School Board to develop agri-based learning projects, curriculum or social enterprise. Engaging youth to become farmers is critical to the future of agriculture in Algoma.
- Municipalities can support local farmers and crafts markets, including inviting them to participate in municipal events (festivals & community events) and identifying venues.

RAIN also has some recommendations for “what to avoid”:

- Avoid development of bylaws without consideration of the impacts on agri-business interests.
- Avoid win-lose scenarios in making decisions regarding land use conflicts. Seek win-win opportunities whenever possible.
- Work in unison with other municipalities to create a stronger voice for addressing rural issues.
- Avoid seeing themselves as an entity unto themselves – rather, find opportunities to initiate regional meetings and planning, including First Nation communities, in developing initiatives.

6.0 LAND CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are specific recommendations as they pertain to land use planning in the Municipality of Huron Shores. The documents that were consulted as part of this assignment include the February 2009 Official Plan and the 2003 Official Plan Background Report. While these initiatives are not exhaustive, they assist in providing some direction for the Municipality to make land use planning decisions coupled with strategic and realistic economic development decisions.

6.1 Recommendation #1: Undertake a Community Improvement Plan for Iron Bridge

Iron Bridge represents the primary urban centre in Huron Shores. A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is only as successful as the desire to take advantage of the programs that a CIP can enable. Should the Municipality be interested in undertaking a CIP, local businesses and residents should be canvassed to ensure that funds are not allocated to programs that will go unused.

A CIP is a planning tool, under the Planning Act, which may be used to stimulate new development or investment within a specified study area identified by a municipal by-law. A CIP also provides opportunities to round out and streamline the Municipality's existing revitalization initiatives. Under a community improvement plan, the Municipality can engage in prioritized, strategic municipal leadership initiatives, such as streetscape improvements, infrastructure investments, land acquisition and improvement, additional planning studies, urban design guidelines and plan monitoring. The Municipality may also offer financial incentives to property owners within the study area, including grants, loans, tax incentives, and building and planning fee reductions, for example.

6.2 Recommendation #2: Tourism Establishments as Secondary Uses in Shoreline Areas (New Zoning By-law)

Upon approval of the Municipality's new Official Plan, a zoning by-law must be prepared within 3 years. It is recommended that when this document is being prepared, that Council consider permitting tourism establishments (or some variation thereof) in many of the zones that would bound shoreline areas and/or permit them as a secondary use in shoreline areas, provided they meet the requirements outlined in the Official Plan for uses that have potential to impact the environment. This could remove some of the municipal delays that some view as being restrictive to development while at the same time, allowing for increased tourism in the area.

6.3 Recommendation #3: Engage MOE/MNR Regarding Lake Capacity

It is recommended that the Municipality engage in discussions with the Ministries of the Environment and Natural Resources to assist in developing a strategy to manage lake development and work to maintain and enhance the quality of the water bodies and tributaries. An investigation should be undertaken to determine what level of funding is available through various programs that could assist in determining development capacity on the available lakes and how to improve the water quality on the lakes that are impaired.

6.4 Recommendation #4: Enforce Property Standards to Enhance Community Attractiveness

It is difficult to determine when tourists and visitors to the municipality will arrive so it is vital that the properties, and municipality overall, “present well”. It is not suggested that the municipality is currently faced with this issue; however, it is recommended that by-law enforcement enforce property standards on an ongoing basis to ensure the tourists and visitors view the municipality at its best.

6.5 Recommendation #5: Remove the “Red-Tape” that Can Delay and Deter Developers

A huge deterrent to a prospective developer is “red-tape” and a long delay, which may result in them going to another municipality. It is recommended that, provided environmental and other impacts are mitigated, in both the industrial and commercial zones, a wide range of uses be permitted. Furthermore, identifying strict zone requirements may also deter development so it is recommended that a range of techniques be used to assist in guiding development while at the same time, not restricting different uses.

This recommendation also feeds into the discussion of a Development Permit System to streamline development applications. While it is not widely used in the Province of Ontario, it is an option that the Municipality may consider. Additional information on Development Permit Systems is located here: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page4755.aspx> and an excerpt of the Ministry’s InfoSheet is located in Appendix I.

7.0 PRIVATE SECTOR CHAMPIONS

Champions are the “force multipliers” of economic development and many other Community Missions. A clearly “Made in the Community” solution, being dependent upon the entrepreneurship and commitment of the individuals in the community.

Such Champions, acting in concert with the municipal Economic Development and Tourism Staff, can lead various initiatives. Champions may choose to act out of Community-minded or altruistic interest, or may have a financial gain to make. The latter is not “wrong”, as long as any investment made by governments is commensurate with the returns expected. These opportunities must be thoroughly vetted through analysis, projections and the creation of a “case” that outlines clearly the investment and benefits to be accrued by each participating party.

Champion-led Initiatives should be developed on an ongoing basis and presented to Council as cases are created that demonstrate their value to the Community. Only those that meet the criteria of being worthwhile investments for the Municipality to consider, should reach this stage.

8.0 THE ECONOMIC INVESTMENT ACTION CASE

This process is recommended for use when any economic development initiative is considered by Council. This is especially so when members of the community come forward with opportunities to develop the economy, and that request funding from the Municipality. It is not intended to replace the existing methods of analysis and the decision-making that the Municipality uses to determine a particular course of action in other situations.

If economic development initiatives are based upon...

- Fact...rather than opinion
- Reasoned advocacy...rather than lobbying
- Thorough analyses of feasibility, collateral implications, true costs and true benefits...rather than a superficial approach

...then widespread acceptance and support are more likely to be achieved, and the initiative will be less vulnerable to unreasoned critique and attack.

The key requirement is to be able to differentiate between the various opportunities that are conceived and to assess the most beneficial to the community. In the private sector, comparisons between most investments are based upon an optimum rate of return, since the focus is almost always on direct dollar generation. In a community, while dollar generation is an important element, there are also socioeconomic factors to be considered.

Stakeholders are most often the source of ideas, opportunities, energy and investment. What do we mean by the term “Stakeholder” in the context of socioeconomic development? Undoubtedly, everyone in the community has a stake in the development of the local economy, and most especially, in the attendant potential for prosperity. In economic development, the term is applied often to those who do, or may, contribute directly towards such an economy, through the conduct of business, with the accompanying creation of employment. This is not a hard and fast definition and we can choose to add any person or group who can assist directly in economic prosperity, for the benefit of the Community as a whole.

Reasonably, Stakeholders have particular interests that they must serve (their “stake”). The Municipality should support instances where the interests of a Stakeholder overlap the interests of the community as a whole, or in large measure. It may then be possible to create a “case” to justify investment by the community.

At the municipal level, the intent is not to invest large sums; more to demonstrate tangible support and provide assistance, which is reasonably under the scope of the Municipality. Some of the mechanisms used are:

- Tax incentives under a Community Improvement Program.
- Grants to assist in particular activities, where there are several businesses involved, and where the benefit for the Community can be shown.
- Use of empty buildings owned by the jurisdiction.
- Staff resources, sometimes-additional resources on contract, to help research and develop the opportunity with the proponents.
- Assisting with applications for assistance from senior levels of government and other agencies.
- Locating investors or other backers, which is not a simple task for many businesses today.

With the limited ability of a municipality to make direct investments, senior levels of government can be approached. Gaining such support may depend upon particular programs that are available at the time from the Provincial and Federal Governments. Sometimes there is latitude for opportunities that are well supported by the public and private sector. This must be explored at the time and a tangible contribution is often expected of the community, possibly in some of the forms above.

All future funding made by the Municipality to organizations based on economic development benefits should be reviewed using the discipline of the Economic Investment Action Case to ensure that the taxpayer is receiving good value for money in return for their investment. This approach enables the jurisdiction to be, at once, hard taskmasters demanding proof of the likely success of the venture and, when that proof is established, confident, and committed advocates of the effort, monitoring progress on a regular basis. This emulates private sector investor behaviour.

Readers familiar with private sector business cases will recognize many of these attributes and, to a greater or lesser degree of depth and precision, most of these will be at least “back-of-mind”, no matter how informal the project may be. More or less information may be needed than is identified here but this is a general template to show the type of questions to be asked. The particular information required and how the jurisdiction internal analysis is carried out, must be formed by, and to suit, the requirements of Council.

- The Applicant
- The Opportunity
- Nature of the benefits
- Assumptions made, with a rationale
- Barriers that must be overcome

- Investment (or costs)
- Resources required
- Timelines: investment and “returns”
- Risks and mitigation
- Recommended lead organization
- Recommended partner organizations
- Measurements of progress
- Measurements of success

The particular review process adopted should be refined to suit the Municipality and is not intended to replace or be overlaid on existing methods of assessment.

9.0 PARTNERING AND ACTING REGIONALLY

The economy is no respecter of jurisdictional boundaries. Boundaries drawn up many years ago may not reflect the true regional nature of an economy today. Further, companies and investors do not recognize such jurisdictional boundaries when considering where to locate; instead they will seek the most beneficial locations, knowing that they can draw easily on the broader regional assets. For the most effective and efficient conduct of economic development, partnering with other jurisdictions and interests is essential.

While all economic investments eventually take root in one jurisdiction or another, when the communities are closely linked, the benefits are not constrained to only that jurisdiction. Recognizing this, many communities in Ontario have banded together to create structures, formal or informal, to act on economic development initiatives, which can more effectively and efficiently serve the needs of all. Often joint marketing efforts are undertaken, as one example.

Partnering is a means by which to achieve similar goals through the sharing of resources and at little additional risk. When acting separately, a jurisdiction can hardly prevent a visiting prospect from becoming aware of a neighbouring jurisdiction. That investor will choose to locate in whichever area best suits their needs.

Partnerships should be established always for specific reasons and the anticipated benefits understood. An important factor in creating partnerships is the fair distribution of costs, risks and rewards, which should be documented clearly at the outset of each partnered initiative.

The appendices to report “East Algoma Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan” expand upon this topic.

10.0 CONCLUSION

If economic development is regarded as a cost, to be eliminated from a budget, then the results will be inadequate in the economy of today and the future. If economic development is regarded as an investment of taxpayer's dollars in order to improve prosperity, with resources deployed to achieve that goal, then positive results are more likely. The outcomes depend upon the leaders, both formal and informal, the support of the Community and their willingness to take risks and invest in future prosperity.

The closest possible collaboration between the public and private sector is a foundation of continuing success. The "Formal Leaders" are those elected (Council), or appointed by those elected, to formally direct efforts towards achieving the goals of the Community. Such people or organizations have both the authority and responsibility to act and are usually held accountable for results. In parallel, there are the "Informal Leaders" (or Champions), who, while neither formally elected nor appointed, have, through their influence and energy, a very positive role to play in these same efforts.



Figure 9 – Leadership for Success

When the interests and activities of both Formal and Informal Leaders resonate, a "force multiplier" effect can be achieved that greatly enhances the overall outcomes of the efforts.

Making use of their energy and talents will aid in the economic development process. Close interaction directly with Councillors can create more trust and understanding of the challenges that each face. This can lead to opportunities (and solutions to challenges) that are more broadly acceptable and for which all can show their backing. These Informal Leaders can also play a major role in the support of the Formal Leaders, when necessary actions are taken that may not be popular in the short term. The credible voices of the Informal Leaders can explain and endorse these tough decisions that fall on the desk of Council or when initiatives do not work out as planned, which will occur on occasions.

"Leadership is doing always what is needed, not always what is wanted."





APPENDICES



APPENDIX I. LAND USE PLANNING CONTEXT

The Municipality of Huron Shores is the easternmost municipality in the sub-district of East Algoma, located east of Plummer Additional and surrounding the Town of Thessalon (Figure A-1). Settlement Areas in the Municipality include the Village of Iron Bridge, Hamlet of Little Rapids, and smaller settlements such as Dean Lake and Sowerby. Crown Land holdings are common in this area, as are a variety of aggregate extraction operations. The most populated centres in Huron Shores are concentrated in Iron Bridge, and Little Rapids. The Town of Thessalon is physically surrounded by Huron Shores, but is an administratively separate municipality. Huron Shores is about 455 km² and reported a population of 1,723 (2011 Census).

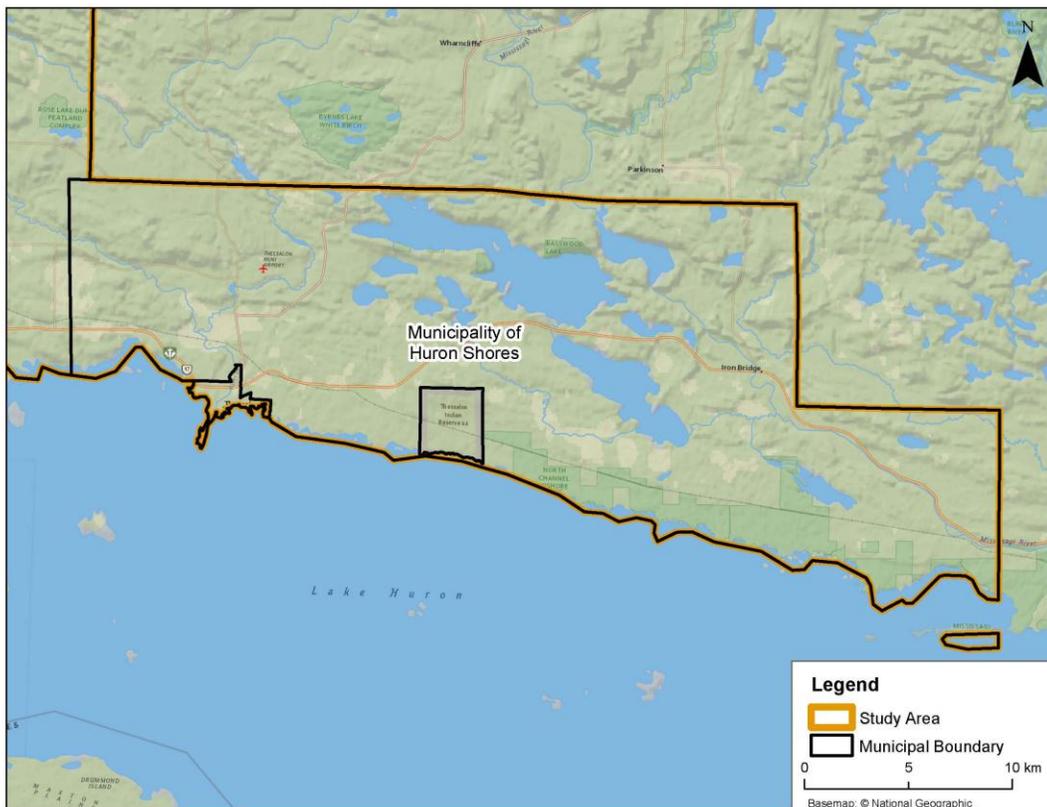


Figure A- 1 – Municipality of Huron Shores

The Municipality of Huron Shores Official Plan

Council adopted a new Official plan in 2009, which is awaiting final approval before the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The February 20, 2009, version of this Plan was consulted for the purposes of this report. The Plan provides policies for this community of between 1,800 and 2,000 people out to the 2027 planning horizon.

The Plan describes Huron Shores as a stable or low growth rural community, which looks to its urban neighbours such as Blind River, Thessalon and Sault Ste. Marie for a variety of commercial and public services which cannot be provided locally. The local economy is dependent on resource-based activities including agriculture, forestry and mineral aggregate extraction.

The policies of the Plan indicate that the 20-year residential development land supply for Huron Shores will be provided through the build-out of lots of record or intensification in existing settlement, lakefront, and rural areas. Seasonal and permanent residential development and recreational commercial uses are directed to designated waterfront areas, generally within about 300 m of the shoreline of a lake or major tributary.

The industrial land supply requirement of Huron Shores is expected to be met in part through the development of a municipal industrial park, which may be appropriately serviced with water and sewer services.

Resource or resource-related uses are directed towards Designated Countryside lands where they do not conflict with the existing sensitive land uses.

No provincially significant agricultural lands have been identified in the Countryside area; however, the Plan provides for agricultural and agriculture-related uses and conserves the best agricultural soils for food production and livestock operations. Non-farm development may be permitted on lesser quality soils provided they do not pose a risk to farming operations.

With the exception of a small area east of Thessalon, Huron Shores depends on private water and sewage services. The policies of the Plan are intended to avoid development densities that would require municipal water services or municipal sewage services, except in the proposed industrial park and on other properties east of Thessalon which may be serviced by that Town.

The economic policies of the Plan encourage activities and initiatives which build on the area's natural and scenic strengths, such as tourism uses. The Plan also provides policies meant to support and encourage home-based and small businesses.

Legislative Authority for Undertaking a Community Improvement Plan

Section 28 of the Planning Act gives the Municipality the legislative authority to define a community improvement project area and prepare a community improvement plan for that area, in accordance with the Municipality's Official Plan and the powers granted under the Planning Act.

Section 28(1) defines community improvement as "the planning or re-planning, design or redesign, re-subdivision, clearance, development or redevelopment, construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation, improvement of energy efficiency, or any of them, of a community improvement

project area, and the provision of such residential, commercial, industrial, public, recreational, institutional, religious, charitable or other uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities, or spaces therefor, as may be appropriate or necessary” and includes the provision of affordable housing under Section 28(1.1). A community improvement plan is defined in the Planning Act as “a plan for the community improvement of a community improvement project area.” A community improvement project area is defined as “a municipality or an area within a municipality, the community improvement of which in the opinion of the council is desirable because of age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reason.”

The Planning Act outlines the powers which may be exercised through a community improvement plan, and within a community improvement project area.

- Under Section 28(3), Council may acquire, hold or clear land;
- Under Section 28(6), Council may construct, repair, rehabilitate or improve buildings on land acquired or held by the Municipality, or it may sell or dispose of land in conformity with the community improvement plan;
- Under Section 28(7), the Municipality may make grants or loans to registered owners or tenants of land in the community improvement project area to pay for eligible costs associated with community improvement. In accordance with Section 28(8), eligible costs include costs related to an environmental site assessment, environmental remediation, development, redevelopment, construction and reconstruction of lands and buildings for rehabilitation purposes or for the provision of energy efficient uses, buildings, structures, works, improvements or facilities;
- Under Section 32(1), where a by-law prescribing property standards is in effect in accordance with Section 15.1 of the Building Code Act, the Municipality may pass a by-law offering grants or loans to pay for the repairs of buildings or the clearing or grading of land. Under Section 33, the Municipality may also establish a demolition control by-law in such an area; and
- Under Section 69(2), where the Municipality provides a tariff of fees with respect to planning applications, the Municipality may also reduce or waive the fees where the Council has deemed it unreasonable to require payment in accordance with the tariff.

Development Permit System InfoSheet

The Development Permit System (DPS) is a new land use planning tool available to all local Ontario municipalities. It provides an alternative approval system which facilitates and streamlines development, promotes community building, and enhances environmental protection. The DPS is part of the government’s commitment to provide municipalities with the tools they need to build strong, sustainable communities, and facilitate responsible growth for a strong Ontario.

The DPS helps strengthen a community's vision for its future by contributing to strategic, integrated and long-term planning, and providing certainty, transparency and accountability on the form of future development for an area.

The DPS provides distinct advantages to municipalities as compared to other planning tools. Specifically, the DPS:

- streamlines approvals
- provides for faster approval timelines (45 vs. 120 days)
- focuses third party appeals at the front end of the process, similar to site plan appeals
- provides a more flexible approvals process, which can reduce the need for minor variances
- provides for a broader range of conditions of approval not available through other planning tools
- allows decisions on development permit applications to be delegated to a municipal employee or a committee appointed by Council
- enables municipalities to incorporate their site alteration and tree-cutting by-laws into the DPS
- combines land use and physical design considerations into one process

What is the DPS?

The DPS combines zoning, site plan and minor variance into one application and approval process. It promotes development by providing for faster timelines, eliminating potential duplication, incorporating flexibility for uses and development standards, and providing a “one-stop” planning service.

At the same time, the DPS builds upon the fundamental principles of planning in Ontario. It promotes the municipal role in developing the appropriate land use vision and policies for the municipality; it respects and maintains the role of the community in shaping the future of their neighbourhoods; it respects and maintains landowner rights in the development process; and it retains the role of the Ontario Municipal Board in resolving land use disputes.

The DPS does not include the lot creation or building permit processes, which continue to be separate and distinct from the DPS.

How do Municipalities Implement the DPS?

Ontario Regulation 608/06 (Development Permits) allows all local municipalities to use the DPS and sets minimum requirements for use of the system.

Before a municipality can issue development permits, the framework for the DPS must first be established in the municipal official plan. Council must amend the official plan to identify the DPS

area, outline the vision and goals for the area, and provide the policy requirements for how the system will work.

Council must also pass a development permit by-law for the DPS area. Like a zoning by-law, the development permit by-law contains a list of permitted uses and standards. The by-law may also identify “discretionary” uses (uses that may be permitted subject to fulfilling certain criteria), permit some variation from development standards, and set out conditions that may be applied to the issuance of a development permit.

A development permit by-law is considered to be a zoning by-law under Section 34 of the Planning Act.

Benefits of the DPS

The DPS incorporates many unique features which distinguish it from other planning tools:

DPS Facilitates Development

- **One Approval:** Zoning, site plan, and minor variance are combined into one application and approval process.
- **Flexibility:** The DPS is a flexible approval system, incorporating flexibility in both development standards and permitted uses (see next page).
- **Faster Review Timelines:** Applicants have a right of appeal after 45 days if Council fails to make a decision on an application (this compares to 120 days for a decision on an application to amend a zoning by-law, for example).
- **Appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board:** The DPS requires an official plan amendment and a development permit by-law to become operational, offering members of the public opportunities to share their opinions early in the process. Once the DPS is in place, only the applicant has the right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board for a decision on a development permit application that conforms to the requirements set out in the official plan policies and development permit by-law, similar to site plan applications.
- **Complete Application:** To ensure municipalities have all the information needed to make the required decisions, the DPS enables municipalities to enhance information and material requirements for an application for approval of a development permit. Municipalities may also exempt classes of development or uses of land from information and material requirements; this recognizes that it may not be reasonable, in every case, to require an applicant to provide all of the detailed information.
- **Streamlining Other Processes:** The definition of “development” under the DPS builds upon the definition under Section 41 of the Planning Act, to also include site alteration and the removal of vegetation. Through this expanded definition, the DPS provides the opportunity to integrate municipal site alteration and tree-cutting by-laws into the DPS.

- **Delegation:** Decisions on development permits can be delegated to either a municipal employee or to a committee appointed by Council. This helps expedite development because decisions on an application do not have to be tied to Council's meeting schedule.
- In the DPS, the public continues to have a key role in shaping the form of their communities. By focusing input and appeals at the front-end of the process, the DPS provides more clarity and certainty to the community's future land use vision.

DPS Provides More Flexible Approval Process

- **Flexibility in Uses:** Like a zoning by-law, a development permit by-law must identify and define a list of permitted uses. However, a development permit by-law may also identify discretionary uses that may be permitted if specified criteria are met. This is important for areas such as environmentally sensitive or contaminated areas where appropriate development has, in the past, been prohibited or hindered.
- **Flexibility in Development Standards:** Like a zoning by-law, a development permit by-law must also identify minimum and maximum development standards. However, a development permit by-law may also establish a specified range of variation from these standards, avoiding the need for minor variances for applications that fall within the prescribed range of variation.

DPS Promotes Strong Communities

The DPS supports the development of strong, healthy, and sustainable communities. The system enables a range of conditions of approval to be applied to a development permit. This includes conditions that must be fulfilled before a development permit is issued, as well as conditions imposed on the issuance of a development permit or both. At the municipality's discretion, one or more of these conditions can also be included in a development agreement which may be registered on title.

The DPS also allows municipalities to better ensure compatibility of development with existing or desired community character, by allowing for conditions related to exterior and sustainable building design, as permitted by Section 41 of the Planning Act.

DPS Promotes Environmental Protection

- **Development in Environmentally Sensitive Areas:** Through the discretionary use provisions discussed above, the DPS provides municipalities with a greater range of options in dealing with environmentally sensitive or hazardous areas, including those lands described in Section 34 of the Planning Act (such as marshy or flood-prone lands and contaminated lands).
- **Ability to Regulate Site Alteration and Removal of Vegetation:** "Development" is defined, in the DPS, to include site alteration and the removal of vegetation. This helps protect water quality, for example, through the requirement for vegetative buffers and erosion control measures.

- **Conditions on Development Permits:** With the DPS, a municipality has the ability to apply conditions that are required to be fulfilled prior to, or imposed upon, the issuance of a development permit. Conditions supporting environmental protection may include, for example, conditions related to ongoing monitoring requirements that are considered necessary for the protection of the natural environment and public health and safety.

Criteria for discretionary uses may include technical studies to determine whether a proposed use is appropriate, and under what conditions.

Permitted height could be varied by a certain amount (up to 5 per cent, for example) subject to identified criteria being fulfilled, such as stepping back of additional height from the streetline. Variations outside the specified range would require an official plan and/or by-law amendment.

Conditions supporting strong communities may include, for example, conditions related to protecting public health and safety, the natural environment and vegetation, community character, and providing the necessary infrastructure and facilities for a desirable quality of life.

DPS Benefits Landowners

The unique advantages of the DPS benefit not only municipalities, but also individual landowners. From the landowner's perspective, for example, the DPS:

- provides a streamlined, integrated and flexible approvals framework
- provides certainty and clarity for landowners and the community by identifying the requirements for development up-front, through the municipality's official plan policies and development permit by-law;
- promotes investment and facilitates development by significantly reducing the time required to obtain development permission;
- provides the convenience of a "one-window" approach to approvals, eliminating potential duplication;
- requires 1 application instead of 3, eliminating the need for separate approvals;
- maintains a similar level of certainty for landowners as exists with zoning in key areas such as permitted uses, development standards, and appeal rights on development permit applications;
- facilitates and promotes development at the development permit applicant stage, as only the landowner can appeal refusal of a development permit or any conditions on a permit to the Ontario Municipal Board;
- provides similar appeal rights to the Ontario Municipal Board for all persons as under zoning, when the requirements for development are being established, or when these are being changed.



From the community's perspective, the DPS also has important public benefits by promoting strategic, long-term planning, and providing certainty, transparency and accountability for the community and other parties in the land use planning system. This is achieved through the up-front, policy-led process of the DPS, which requires community involvement in the development of the appropriate land use vision and requirements for development in the DPS area. Once the system is implemented, the DPS reaffirms and supports the importance of this community vision. Any changes to the requirements for development require community input and participation, and are subject to appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board.

APPENDIX II. WORKSHOP ON COMMUNITY VALUES

These are the outcomes of the Workshop on “Community Values held in Huron Shores to “Guide the Economic Development Mission”.

As emphasized at the Workshop, openness and transparency are key aspects of the project process; the outcomes of the session were recorded and then “processed” as follows.

The Community grouped themselves around tables. After an introductory presentation, questions were asked of the groups, which were discussed and then recorded verbatim on individual flip charts.

- First, the contents of the flip charts were transcribed into a data-base, table-group by table-group, in the order in which the points were made. This data was then “frozen”, permitting reproduction of the original flip charts at any time in the future.
- Then the input was separated into Values (DON'T WANT and DO WANT) and IDEAS.
- The two sets of Values points were then reviewed and categorized. While such categorization can be accomplished in many different ways, and with finer and coarser degrees of analyses, our purpose was to focus on the economic development implications. During the Workshop, the conversations were deliberately not constrained to economic development matters, since Community Values are much broader. As a result, some of the points recorded relate directly to economic development, while others only connect indirectly.

Each Value point was “scored” by the Workshop participants to indicate those issues which were of most importance to them. These scores are also shown in the list.

- The Ideas were not further processed, and were added to the other ideas that arose during the project.

When reviewing the attached, the reader will note some conflicting points (not everyone will agree on everything in a Community) as well as some apparently contrary perspectives. For example, while more and better services and amenities are desired, people also want lower taxes. This is entirely normal and, once more, points towards the need for reasonable compromise in a Community. Of course, one solution to this is increased economic activity, the resulting prosperity enabling the Community to afford these better services and amenities, perhaps without an increase in taxes.

The Values were then used by the consultants to derive a Draft Mission Statement for Economic Development. This was accomplished by:

- Reviewing the Values (DON'T WANT and DO WANT) for their score.
- Using the higher scoring items that relate directly to economic development as crucial elements of the Mission Statement

Values as Expressed by Community	Score
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Agriculture - DON'T WANT

No elk	1
Loss of agricultural land	
Imported species; elk, wild turkey	2
Agricultural land to be bought up	1

Agriculture - DO WANT

Value-added industries for agriculture and forestry; maple syrup, furniture	8
Promote agriculture; revitalize the potential; adopt best agricultural practices; local foods	12
Hemp farms	

Community - DON'T WANT

To watch the community die	4
To be solely a retirement settlement; loss of family values, institutions, education, culture	3
Super schools	1
Public school to close	
Over-development	
Non-inclusiveness; loss of mutual respect	
More people to leave	2
Loss of small town appeal and tourists	
Loss of rural lifestyle versus urban style; banking, social services	7
Loss of community influence on outside industry	
Loss of community feel	3
Loss of community activities	2
Increased poverty	
Impending change in postal system	8
Having private bankers control our debt	
Gated community	
For the community to disappear	6
For Iron Bridge to disappear	
Empty buildings	
Constant threats to my peace of mind	
Compromises	
Children to leave area for jobs	
Children leaving and not returning; family values; institutions; culture	
Age discrimination	

Community - DO WANT

Unified school system; resources go further	1
Sustainable, reasonable and humane development	
Population mix of different ages (demographics)	
Natural gas	
More stewardships	4
More policing	1
Managed population growth	
Inclusive, welcoming community to different cultures (Amish, Indian, etc.)	5
Improved roads and rail	5
Improved rail and passenger lines	17

Values as Expressed by Community

Score

Improved access to broadband communications to southern Ontario standards; cellular upgrade; 4G	5
High speed internet	
Growth in our community	
Diversity for the community and its individuals	
Community to grow	
An ongoing professional facilitator	3
Accessibility to services	6
A tidy municipality	4

Environment - DON'T WANT

Windmill farms; aesthetics and loss of land	2
Wind farms	3
Unsustainable use of natural resources	2
To waste paper	
Thoughtless destruction of trees and animal habitat	
Regional waste management - imported from out of the region	5
Pollution of any type	
Polluters	
Polluted water	1
Over-populated lakes	
Nuclear waste manufacturing facility	4
Nuclear power plant	2
Nuclear power	1
Nuclear generator	3
Nuclear facilities; dangerous health issues due to radiation	11
No large carbon footprint industries	
Negative impact on our environment; i.e.: Toronto's garbage or toxic waste	
Negative environmental impact	4
More hydroelectric dams	
Maple trees cut down	
Land polluted from garbage dumps	
Hydro plant	3
Garbage dump for southern Ontario	
Excessive pollution	
Clear-cutting	
Chemical trails (aircraft)	
Anything that threatens the existing environment	15
Anything nuclear	3
Any industry that dumps waste in our rivers; need a clean environment	2

Environment - DO WANT

Reforestation	5
Neutral environmental impact	3
Healthy environment (air, nature, water)	
Enhancement of our present natural resources	5
Clean energy	
Clean air	
Better waste management	

Values as Expressed by Community	Score
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Government - DON'T WANT

Waste of taxpayers money and corruption in Municipality; stagnation; lack of development	1
To become a huge municipality	6
Political corruption	2
Overburden of taxes	1
Over leverage the Municipality to create economic development	2
More privatization (MTO)	
Mishandling of municipal funds	1
Less regulation on privately owned gravel pits	1
Higher property taxes	4
Excessive government red tape	

Government - DO WANT

Sustainable infrastructure	
Provincial government investment in northern Ontario	1
More timely attention given to building ideas	4
More strategic planning	
More provincially funded municipal infrastructure	5
More local control of assets	
More infrastructure	
Lower taxes - put more thought into it	2
Less red tape concerning special interest groups	
Hydroelectric power run by Municipality	2
A really good website	

Health - DON'T WANT

Vaccines

Business and Industry - DON'T WANT

To lose any more businesses	
Sacrifice of "one lake" or watershed to facilitate big business	
Private industry that requires continual government support to survive; unsustainable	7
No heavy industries; e.g.: steel, pulp mills - due to pollution and aesthetics	7
Monopoly on sales of maple syrup (similar to Wheat Board)	2
Mega-projects	3
Industry that is an eyesore; aesthetics, pollution	4
Industry that depends on waterfront property; highest value land is gone; aesthetics	5
Foreign ownership/control of industry and assets	
Big industry	

Business and Industry - DO WANT

Use of local natural resources	
Sustainable industry	
Solar farms in wasteland areas	
Small value-added industries; from forest to produced goods	14
More local processing of natural resources	9
More jobs	3

Values as Expressed by Community

Score

More internet jobs	
More employment; diverse industry to bring people back	25
Light industry	
Land development	
Jobs	6
Increased economic prosperity	17
Improved economy	1
Create sustainable employment	1
Clean industry; i.e.: value-added forest products	14

For Seniors - DON'T WANT

Negative impacts on seniors

For Seniors - DO WANT

Keep hospitals and seniors facilities	4
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Tourism - DON'T WANT

Too many tourists
Industry that is solely tourist oriented; too much dependency on one industry

Tourism - DO WANT

Beautify the area; build on our strengths	5
Beautification	2

Youth - DON'T WANT

Our children leaving to get an education and to find jobs; family values and loss of family institution	
Lose young people to distant cities (youth out-migration)	
Idle youth	
Brain drain, especially of youth; loss of well paying jobs and well educated people, youth	6

Youth - DO WANT

More kids in the community and school	
Keep youth in area	1

Ideas Generated in the Workshop

These were the ideas generated in the latter part of the Community Workshop. These have not been categorized and were added to the mix of potential initiatives to be considered for the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

- 4G networks to enable local jobs (internet)
- A Tim Horton's in every town
- Access to local education opportunities
- Agriculture
- Be entrepreneurial
- Build houses for people to occupy and move here; creates and increases the tax base, jobs and spirit
- Cash crop processing
- Create a new province of Northern Ontario
- Create fair and responsible development of both resources and land
- Create jobs; after jobs are created the population increases and the community is repopulated
- Cultural and personal enrichment opportunities
- Develop committee/working group
- Eco-tourism
- Elder care/day care
- Elect an MP/MPP of the governing party
- Encourage cottage industries; e.g.: working from home and still raise families
- Enhance infrastructure to support industry development (mining, forestry, energy)
- Enhance tourism
- Fly fishing and fishing camps
- High speed internet for all Huron Shores
- Hire a professional facilitator
- Hire consultants
- Hydroelectric dam on Mississauga River
- Improve municipal website
- Improve the visitors first impression of Huron Shores
- Keep school open
- Landscape with no interruptions from government
- Loan interest programs
- Make Huron Shores a four season tourist destination
- Organic gardening/sustainable agriculture
- Pellet factory
- Primary cottage industry
- Promote artisan culture
- Promote available commercial properties or properties for sale to attract businesses/families
- Reduce taxes: smaller municipality; stop "make work projects"; encourage stewardship



Remove entry barriers to agriculture; ie:150 dairy farmers in Algoma Milk Marketing Board reduced to 9

Remove start-up barriers to all businesses, especially for Huron Shores residents
Spend less percentage of funds on roads

Tourism, with regulations to protect the environment

Use HST to fund these ideas

Youth centre/environment

APPENDIX III. SYNOPSIS OF RESPONDENT DISCUSSIONS

The majority of time in this project was spent by the consultants in discussions with dozens of members of the community of Huron Shores. The purpose of these discussions was:

- To identify possible avenues for economic development originating from within the community
- To assess the level of support for the strategic directions emerging in the project
- To identify potential Champions who might be willing to devote time and energy towards bringing various initiatives to fruition

Many of the respondents had very similar thoughts and the following represents a synopsis of these discussions:

Tourism

- Ontario is not promoting itself sufficiently
- Our area is a retreat but the amount of U.S. tourist traffic has been reduced
- Tourism needs to adapt to the changing preferences of the tourist
- We have seen a pick-up in the number of U.S. travellers in the past year
- The expansion of highway 400 would make this area more accessible to the southern Ontario population
- The sailing here is fantastic and needs to be promoted more
- Tourism is essential to our local businesses and must be encouraged
- The area is beautiful
- The water is underutilized; the sailing here is world-class
- Only Iron Bridge and Bruce Mines are “noticeable” from the highway; need to make people aware of where we are and what we are
- Need more commercial property on the highway
- Events and festivals are key to attracting tourists
- Effective, modern signing is essential on the highway
- Must market the area to attract tourists
- Get tour operators to stop here
- Recruit well-spoken volunteers as hosts for points of interest
- Need a concerted regional effort to promote the area
- Work with Amish to attract more tourists

Agriculture and Forestry

- The proposed canola crushing plant in Plummer Additional is an example of agri-value added; need more of this
- Excess hardwood pulp conversion to pellets
- The Amish are showing us the value of diversity on the land; they use different methods to farm
- The average age for farmers in the area is in their late-fifties; need to encourage younger farmers to come in
- Regional branding of agri-products
- Hay might be a value-added opportunity
- Need a consistent means to buy produce locally to better support the local farmers
- Maple syrup can provide excellent returns on investment and quickly compared to other opportunities

Miscellaneous

- Council must be prepared to invest – take a risk
- Leadership is essential
- Created a home for the aged with assisted living
- Create seniors complexes
- Increase trap-rock sales
 - Promote lake cottages Need to hire the right person to carry out economic development and the Council must be supportive
 - Local people have been trying on their own to move things forward but they run out of time and energy; need a concerted effort by all to stimulate the economy
 - Promote the lifestyle
 - Lack of local amenities is a detriment

APPENDIX IV. A WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

The following is a paper that was presented at the Community Workshop on Values by members of the Community. This paper was well received by the participants at that workshop.

Paper presented by Members of the Community

(reproduced from an electronic copy as provided to the consultants; only minor reformatting made to fit this document structure)

Re: Economic Development of Huron Shores

Submitted October 24, 2011 at the Day and Bright Community Centre

Thank you for the opportunity to express our ideas concerning the future development of Huron Shores.

In pioneer times, this area was referred to as a “Land of Promise”. Often the promise was not fulfilled because people tried to impose their ideas for development that were not sustainable in this area. The area around Maple Ridge is a fine example. In spite of farmers best efforts, the land was just not productive. Eventually, someone decided to exploit the land’s potential and there is a very prosperous aggregate business flourishing there today. Right now maple trees are being cut for lumber and firewood (they require 50 plus years to grow back) instead of using their sustainable production for maple syrup which would provide a yearly income. We should take a lesson from Quebec where maple trees are protected.

This meeting, almost a century and a half later, suggests that our area has become a “Land of Unfulfilled Promises” and that we want to try again to do something to change that. To that end, we would like to make some suggestions that would promote the sustainable development of Huron Shores in a post-industrial age. We must avoid the trap of industrial development that would bring short-term gain with long-term pain. No more broken dreams due to detrimental development schemes that benefit others and that will leave us with a damaged environment and economy for the next fifty years. The only industrial development we will be offered is that which no one else is willing to have near them and for good reason!

Let’s exploit the subtle realities and potential of Huron Shores and the North Shore of Lake Huron as a separate and distinctive region of Ontario. Let’s enhance, protect and share all that the area has to offer.

It can be done. Remember the example of Elliot Lake. In the ‘boom and bust’ cycle of a natural resource economy, the small, modern city rapidly emptied after the mines closed. It wasn’t a temporary trailer town, so the physical assets couldn’t just be moved to the next boom area. The problem was how to fill the abandoned homes with people who could sustain themselves economically under the new reality of minimal employment opportunities. They cleverly appealed to the growing retiring population of the province who had a relatively fixed but reliable source of income and the leisure time to enjoy recreational activities of all kinds. The major negative reality was the radioactive tailings left from the mines. They have spent millions managing the tailings and assuring the population the remediation is to the level achievable by the best modern technology.

In Huron Shores, we have not had a ‘boom’ that damaged the surface or subsurface. We are in a far stronger position for sustainable, successful development. BUT, we cannot entertain the temptations of mega-projects that would create construction jobs for only a few people for a few years and then render the land dangerous for the foreseeable future, way beyond our lifetimes.

Evaluation of Potential Economic Development for Huron Shores.

Physical Assets:

- Unique geology
- Accessible wilderness
- Four distinct seasons
- “Group of Seven” natural beauty
- Trans-Canada highway
- Muskoka-like abundance of lakes
- Lake Huron
- Abundant wildlife
- Proximity to the American border
- Successful Farms

Human Assets:

- Active farming families
- Artisans and artists
- Active retirees with extensive training
- Employable people who are willing to provide services
- People who can telecommute (we need reliable high speed)

Overall, this area needs an image, maybe like that of New England, to make others aware of:

- Culture and heritage of local First Nations
- The natural beauty
- The unique geology and landscape
- Inexpensive but quality recreational experiences
- Affordable and enjoyable sustainable living for retirees
- Charm of active and vibrant community life such as community suppers, card nights. Christmas concerts and active interest groups
- Special sites that are relatively invisible to visitors and many local residents, such as the Boom Camp Trails, Falls of the Mississauga, Bell's Falls, Harris Creek. Lake Huron at Dean Lake, the public beach at Little Basswood Lake and the beautifully signed historic trails whose location is a mystery
- Dark skies where the stars can be observed on any clear night of the year
- Hunting and fishing opportunities

The infrastructure is in place for hunting and fishing and this is the only activity that people in southern Ontario are aware of since it is promoted by Algoma Kinniwabi. Most people in Southern Ontario don't fish or hunt.

Why not promote:

- Natural beauty such as the Deer Trail Touring Route but with accessible explanations of what one is viewing?
- Affordable opportunities for artists wanting to experience plein air wilderness painting?
- Educational workshops in arts and crafts for all ages (like those offered by Sheila Currie)?
- Local services required by an aging or non-resident population, such as landscaping assistance (mowing and snow removal), opening and closing cottages, shuttle service between nearby towns, housekeeping, cooking (like Fred Falls), reliable transportation to Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury by Shuttle bus or Budd car?
- The local geology by offering reduced rates to the Geology Departments across North America who come with students each summer? In return, they could provide mini-lectures and field trips for non-geologists.
- Family summer camps or lodge experiences with affordable accommodation and activities for parents and engaging programs for children?
- Shop(s) visible from the highway (not in private homes) offering goods of local manufacture from the Amish, potters, artists, etc. instead of just during the times of the 'tours'?

- The quaint and cozy ambience of the villages by filling in the ‘gaps’ and consolidating the image?
- Farm experiences either by offering farm vacations or by having events showcasing aspects of farming life (such as the Barn Tours)?
- Consistent, quality opportunities for resident and visiting children such as travelling Science North events on a weekly basis?
- Development and maintenance of well-signed hiking trails with guides for visitors.
- Boat tours, especially of Lake Huron

Summary:

In order to achieve sustainable development in this area without seriously compromising the beauty and quality of life we have now, we are going to need to train local people in entrepreneurial skills such as bookkeeping and business management. Many will also require financial assistance for a while. We also will need to provide training opportunities for service providers and their employees so that the level of service provided is reliable, efficient, enthusiastic and sustainable – something in which everyone can take pride because visitors and residents will be more likely to have happy memories of the area and will be more likely to want to return or stay.

A professional facilitator is essential to co-ordinate these activities, aid and encourage small entrepreneurs, find government funding and make our North Shore known and available! This facilitator could be employed by all the municipalities of the North Shore if they share the same vision.

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