

TAKE ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE HURON



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DRAFT Sustainability Plan

PREPARED BY:

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UNDER THE DIRECTION OF:

The Sustainable Huron Steering Committee
Huron County

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Foundation for a Sustainable Future

Take Action for Sustainable Huron

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

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

Table of Contents

What is Sustainability?	1
Why does Huron County need a Sustainability Plan?	2
Building our Plan	3
Early Win Projects	4
Selection of the Priority Projects	4
A Conversation about Sustainability	5
Our Vision	6
Our Mission	7
Sustainability Principles	7
Priority Projects	8
PRIORITY PROJECT: Develop a foundation for Rural Storm Water Management Plans across all watersheds in Huron County	9
PRIORITY PROJECT: Municipal Energy Plans	12
PRIORITY PROJECT: “Make Huron Home”	15
PRIORITY PROJECT: Arts and Culture Resource Hub	17
PRIORITY PROJECT: Enhance opportunities for active transportation in Huron County.	19
PRIORITY PROJECT: Using the Transportation Demand Management study recommendations to pursue alternative opportunities for getting people around in Huron.	21
PRIORITY PROJECT: The School Yard Planting Project	23
PRIORITY PROJECT: Continue to encourage Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) programs and implement effective strategies; and share best practices among towns and villages to ensure progress and development.	26
PRIORITY PROJECT: Increase the profile of local food as a means to diversify and enhance the local farm economy and promote healthy eating.	28
PRIORITY PROJECT: Engage and embrace the role of youth in Huron County's agriculture	30
PRIORITY PROJECT: Lens of Consideration.	32
Developing the Plan	35
Geographic Scope of the Plan	36
Where Are We Now?	37
Community Feedback: Huron County Priorities	38
Goals and Strategies	41
Pillar: Environmental Integrity	41
Theme: Natural Environment	41
Theme: Energy Conservation	41
Theme: Liveable Communities	42
Pillar: Community and Social Well-Being	42

Theme: Population	42
Theme: Community Needs	43
Theme: Healthy Active Communities	43
Theme: Transportation	43
Pillar: Economic Security	44
Theme: Economy	44
Theme: Agriculture and Food	44
Theme: Downtowns	44
Theme: Renewable Energy	45
Implementation Plan	46
Leadership and Champions	46
Communication and Awareness	47
Accountability	47
Monitoring and Evaluation	48
Appendices	50
Additional Resources	50

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

Take Action for Sustainable Huron

What is Sustainability?

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

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



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

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

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

Why does Huron County need a Sustainability Plan?

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

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

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

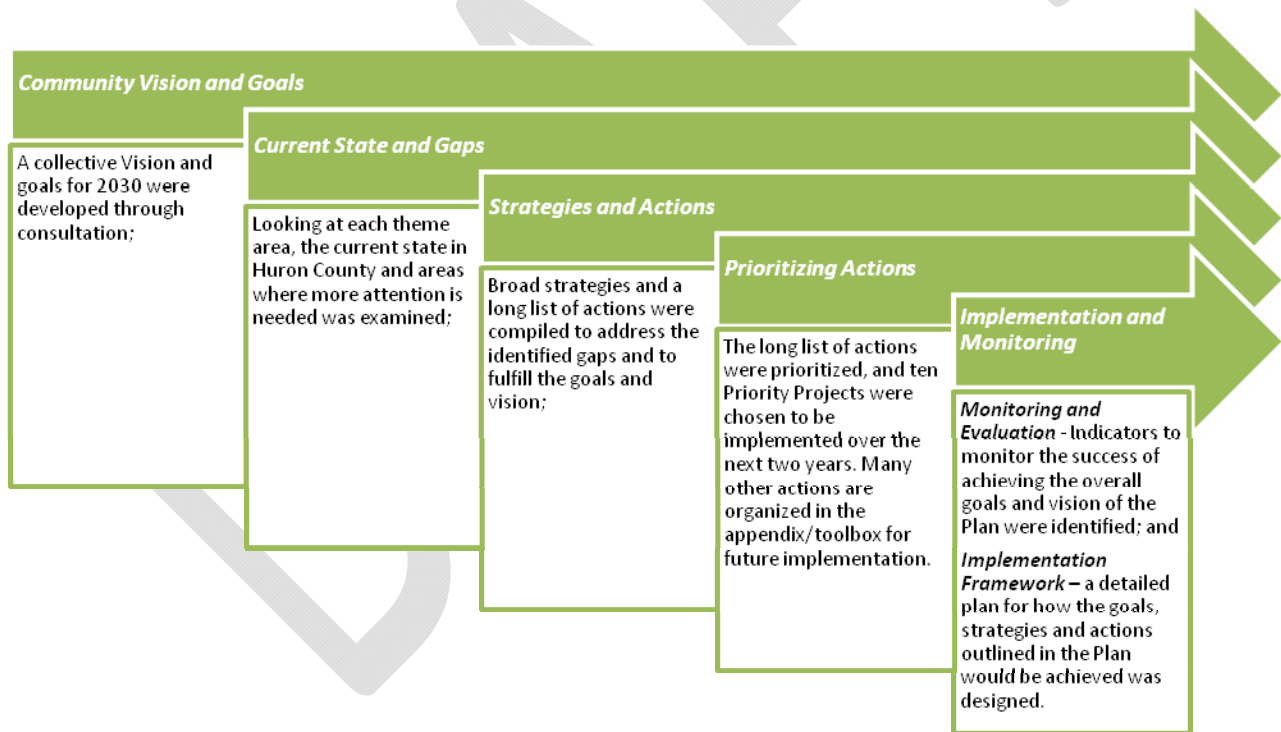
- Having a clear long-term vision;
- Strengthening economic vitality and social security;
- Improving our self-sufficiency;
- Protecting and restoring our natural assets;
- Minimizing our ecological footprint;
- Attracting great talent and building healthy communities;
- Empowering people through participation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

Building our Plan

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

Key Stages

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



Early Win Projects

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

Selection of the Priority Projects

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

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

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

Theme Areas from <i>Take Action</i>	
1) Economy	6) Natural Environment
2) Transportation	7) Population
3) Agriculture	8) Downtowns
4) Energy	9) Community Needs
5) Liveable Communities	10) Healthy Active Communities

A Conversation about Sustainability

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

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

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

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



Our Vision

A Community for Generations

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

Our Mission

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

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

Sustainability Principles

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

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

Priority Projects

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

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Natural Environment

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

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

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

Description

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

Activities will include

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

Lead and Coordination

- Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee

Partners

- Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
- Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
- Lake Huron Southeast Shore Initiative (interagency steering committee and working group)
- Stewardship Council

- Lakeshore Groups
- General Farm Organizations
- Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

Measures of Success

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

Timeline

- This action will be complete by the end of 2013.

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

Climate Change in Huron County

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

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

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

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

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

Energy Conservation

Goal: Huron County will maximize energy conservation.

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

PRIORITY PROJECT: Municipal Energy Plans

Description

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

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

Activities will include

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

Lead and Coordination

- Huron County
- Municipalities within Huron County

Measures of Success

- Creation of baseline data
- Attaining energy reduction targets

Timeline

This action will be completed by the end of 2013.

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

Sustainability in Action

The Schoolyard Planting Project

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



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

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

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

Population

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

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

PRIORITY PROJECT: “Make Huron Home”

Description

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

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

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

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

Activities will include:

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

Lead and Coordination

- Immigration partnership Council

Collaborators

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

Measures of Success

To be completed

Timeline

This action will be implemented by the end of 2013.

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Community Needs

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

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

PRIORITY PROJECT: Arts and Culture Resource Hub

Description

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

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

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

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

Actions will include

- Identify key leads from the Sustainable Huron Committee
- Develop an action team (Huron County member, Huron County Arts and Culture Coordinator, Huron Arts and Heritage Network)
- Develop goals of project and set clear tasks for coordinator

- Coordinator to undertake outreach with arts and culture groups to understand their needs
- Develop resource hub
- Get resources/information online

Lead and Coordination

- Huron Arts and Heritage Network

Resources

- Huron County Cultural Services

Collaborators

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

Measures of Success

- Strategy is developed
- Action team is in place

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2013.

Healthy Active and Liveable Communities

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

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

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

Description

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

- Liveable Communities
- Healthy Active Communities
- Community Needs
- Economy
- Population

Activities will include

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

Lead

- Transportation Task Force

Resources

- Huron County Health Unit

Collaborators

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

Measures of Success

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

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2013.

Transportation

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

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

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

Description

This project will address Huron County's need to get people around (who don't have transportation or cars available to them). Results from this action will support strategies under the following Theme Areas:

- Transportation
- Community needs
- Liveable Communities

Activities will include

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

Lead

- Transportation Task Force

Resources

- Huron County Social Services Department

Collaborators

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

Measures of Success

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

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2015.

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Liveable Communities

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

Strategy: Preserve Huron County’s History and Rural Character

PRIORITY PROJECT: The School Yard Planting Project

Description

This project will be the expansion of the early win that created naturalized outdoor classrooms at three of Huron’s elementary schools. This project will improve the quality of existing natural areas, providing shade and wind protection, fostering natural environment and ecological awareness, providing erosion control, and engaging youth to create meaningful change. This project helps to showcase sustainability in action by engaging youth in the plan.

Activities will include

- Expanding the pilot project to all schools in the County

Lead

- Maitland Valley and Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authorities

Resources

- Foundation for Education

Collaborators

- School Boards
- Huron County Planning and Development Department

Measures of Success

- # of schoolyard planting projects

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2014.

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

Sustainability in Action

Food Enterprise Opportunities Project

Huron County is one of the most agriculturally rich areas in Canada – with an output second only to Essex County in Ontario. Even with the great momentum in the County for local food, the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee identified the opportunity to continue to help strengthen and build capacity for the local food movement in areas such as distribution, processing, and product development. In order to help work towards solutions to these issues, Sustainable Huron embarked on a partnership with Huron Perth Farm to Table to help develop and support initiatives pertaining to local food, through the Food Opportunities Project.

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

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

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

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

Economy and Downtowns

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

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

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

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

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

Description

Ensuring that our businesses stay strong and prosperous is a huge part of our economic development in Huron County. A number of BR&E initiatives are already occurring in Huron County municipalities and villages. Sharing best practices and building on successes will ensure sustainability for businesses in Huron County.

Activities will include

- Identify more ways to become business friendly
- Review by-laws of downtowns (i.e. multi-use)
- All downtowns need to complete BR&E
- Need to provide funding to implement strategies
- Use economic development marketing tools
- Host a bus tour for Municipal staff and Council that would illustrate best practices in Huron County.
- Conduct “SWOT” analysis as part of current BR&E programs

Lead

- Huron Economic Development Partnership

Resources

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

Collaborators

- Municipalities
- Chambers of Commerce
- BIAs
- Other local employers or businesses in Huron County

Measures of Success

- # of BR&E studies underway/completed
- Funding received

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2014.

Agriculture and Food

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

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

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

Description

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

- Agriculture
- Economy
- Population
- Natural Environment
- Healthy Active Community
- Community Needs

Activities will include

- Work with general farms organizations and groups to identify ongoing improvements that contribute to environmental best practices.
- Coordination and focus of ongoing local food action plans with emphasis on a bulk food auction, promotion of local food processing.
- Facilitating local food use in Institutional facilities and restaurants.

Lead

- Huron Perth Farm to Table

Resources

- The Huron Business Development Corporation (HBDC)

- Huron County Health Unit

Collaborators

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

Measures of Success

- *To be completed*

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2013

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Agriculture and Food

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

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

PRIORITY PROJECT: Engage and embrace the role of youth in Huron County's agriculture

Description

This project will focus on the development of a local agricultural leadership program which will promote careers in agriculture, and allow youth to identify their own entrepreneurial endeavours; it will also focus on succession planning.

Activities will include

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

Lead

- Huron Federation of Agriculture

Resources

- Huron Business Development Corporation
- Huron Small Business Enterprise Centre
- Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator(s)

Collaborators

- University of Guelph
- Agriculture high school majors
- Business
- Junior farmers

- 4H
- Health Unit
- REACH

Measures of Success

- Funding is obtained
- Strategy is developed

Timeline

This action will be completed by 2015

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Community Needs

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

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

PRIORITY PROJECT: Lens of Consideration.

Description

Develop a “lens of consideration” to ensure inclusivity and affordability in all programs and events in Huron County. This “lens” would be widely distributed and ideally sit on everyone’s desk as they plan events.

Activities will include

- Review and adapt the community planning lens from the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health
- Adapt for Huron County
- Share with stakeholders, clients and the community

Lead

- Huron County Health Department

Collaborators

- All interested organizations in Huron County

Measures of Success

- Lens of consideration is developed
- # of people using the lens of consideration

Timeline

This action will be completed by the end of 2012.

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

Sustainability in Action

Manufacturing Efficiencies Project



The Manufacturing Efficiencies Project is a project that crosses two sustainability pillars: it aims to help local companies identify opportunities to decrease their impact on the environment while making their business more efficient and reducing their bottom line. Manufacturers of Huron County were invited to participate in this project which is a partnership between Sustainable Huron project, the HMA and the Midwestern Green Jobs Strategy.

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

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

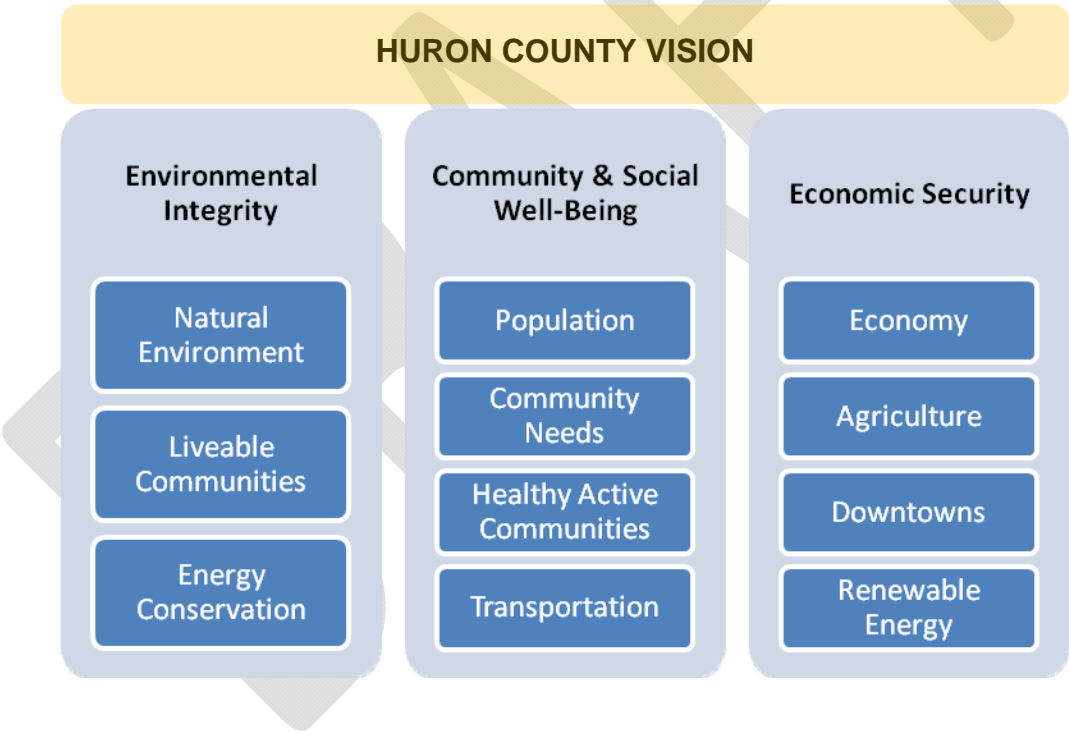
To follow the development of this project, check out the YouTube videos which provide interviews with the pilot companies and will help to document their experience with integrating sustainability into their business (links to the videos can be found on the HMA website).

Developing the Plan

The Sustainability Plan is made up of the following components

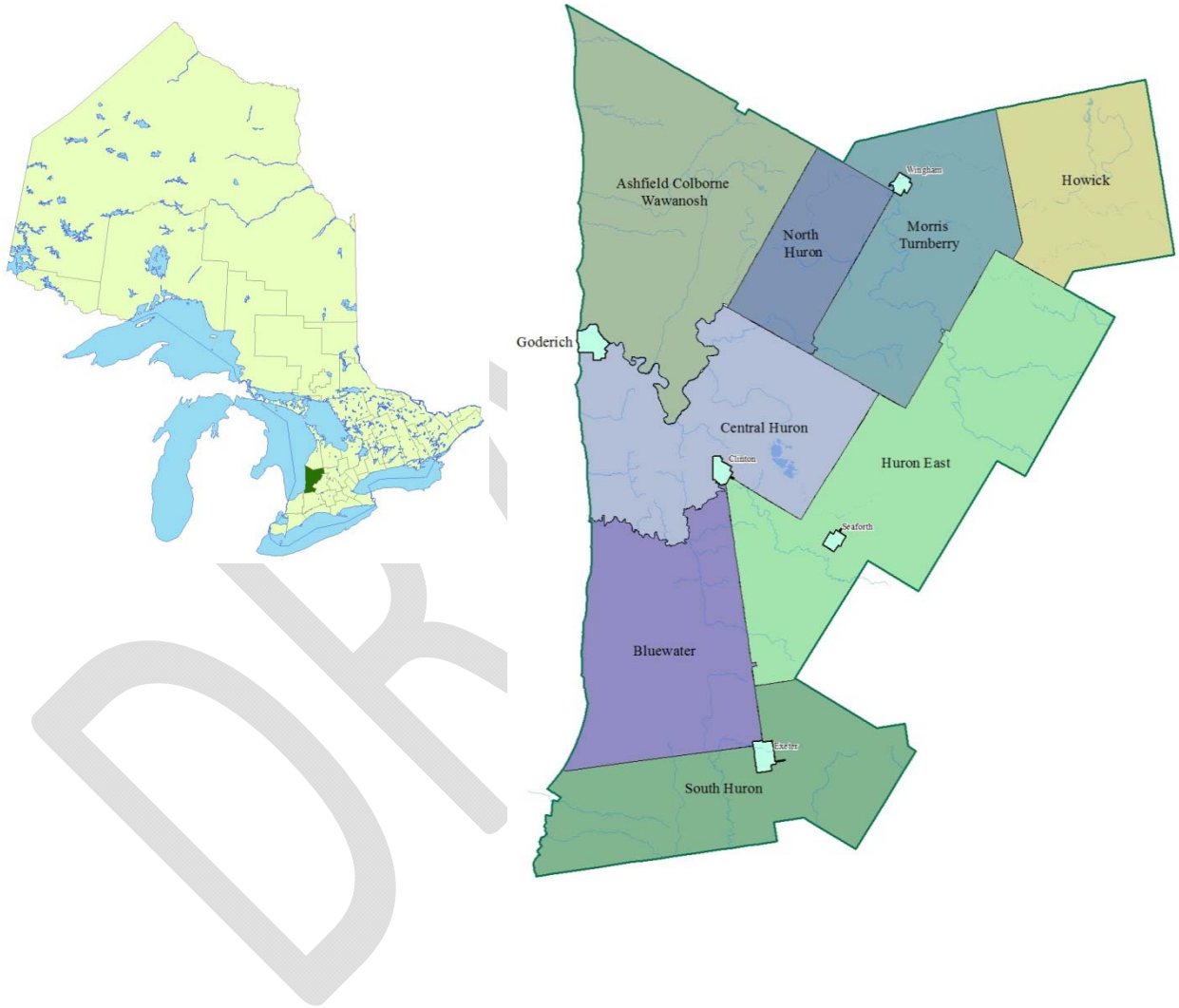
- Vision Statement;
- Community Goals for 2030 (by Theme);
- Strategies (by Theme);
- Priority Projects;
- Immediate and Future Actions (Appendix A); and
- Implementation Plan.

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



Geographic Scope of the Plan

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



Where Are We Now?

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

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

Environmental Challenges

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

Social/Community Challenges

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

Economic Challenges

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

Opportunities for a Sustainable Future

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

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

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

Community Feedback: Huron County Priorities

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

Environmental Priorities:

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

Community and Social Priorities:

- A welcoming community to new residents and visitors
- Community pride and ownership
- Funding for the arts
- Developing the next generation of community leaders
- Compact communities that are walk-able
- Connections to service providers outside Huron County
- Enhanced mental health resources and public awareness
- Addressing homelessness and affordable housing
- Walking and biking trails and active transportation

Economic Priorities

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

Community Questionnaire

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

1. *Economy*

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

2. *Natural environment*

- Protecting natural areas

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

3. *Agriculture*

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

These priority areas were part of the cornerstone considerations in developing the Huron County Sustainability Plan.

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

Goals and Strategies

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

Pillar: Environmental Integrity

Theme: Natural Environment

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

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

Theme: Energy Conservation

Goal: Huron County will maximize energy conservation.

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

Theme: Liveable Communities

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

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

Community and Social Well-Being

Theme: Population

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

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

Theme: Community Needs

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

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

Theme: Healthy Active Communities

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

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

Theme: Transportation

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

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

Pillar: Economic Security

Theme: Economy

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

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

Theme: Agriculture and Food

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

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

Theme: Downtowns

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

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

Theme: Renewable Energy

Huron County will utilize local renewable energy sources.

- GE1. Maximize Appropriate Local Energy Generation in Huron County

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Implementation Plan

Taking Action to Reach Our Vision

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

Leadership and Champions

Sustainability Coordinator

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

- Coordinate and organize meetings and provide administrative/project support to the sustainability leads and project partners
- Will source funds for priority projects
- Assemble an annual “state of sustainability in Huron” report
- Organize an annual sustainability meeting which will bring together all interested stakeholders to discuss the different projects, have updates, and ensure open communication

Sustainability Connectors

Three leads will be identified to represent each of the pillars of sustainability (economy, environment, and socio-cultural). Leads will be selected based on their ability to advance partnerships to help support development of priority projects.

Project Based Members

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

Project Partners

As Sustainable Huron moves into implementation, organizations, groups, members and municipalities will be asked to commit to be an action partner towards implementation. Each

partner will be asked to sign a commitment towards sustainability, and will be asked to approve, in principle the vision and goals for Sustainable Huron.

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

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

Communication and Awareness

Annual Sustainability Forum

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

Engagement and Communications

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

A communications strategy will be developed as part of the first task of setting up the implementation.

Accountability

Progress Reporting

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

Priority Project Selection

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

Third Party Auditors

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

Full Sustainability Plan Review

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

Monitoring and Evaluation

Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators

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

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

Priority Project Indicators

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

- percentage of native forest cover
- Number of blue flag beaches
- Number of farms participating in environmental farm plans
- Municipal energy consumption
- Average commuter distance / year
- Net in-migration of youth 25 - 30
- Population
- Median age of population
- Number of farmers under 40
- Number of private and public art spaces, culture & heritage programs
- Kilometres of recreation trails, bike lanes per capita
- Number of hospital beds, long-term care beds
- Kilometres of roads per capita

- Special transit ridership
- Businesses open/closed or #of businesses belonging to a BIA or Chamber
- Number of good food boxes purchased/#of farmer's markets per capita
- Number of residents below LICO/#of residents on affordable housing list

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Appendices

Appendix A: Huron County Sustainability Tool-Box

Appendix B: List of Participating Organizations

Appendix C: Community Partners Commitment to the Plan

Additional Resources

Current Conditions Report

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