



Appendix C Current Conditions Report

TAKE ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE HURON



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

December 2011

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Background

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Report Scope and Format.....	1
1.2	Why Plan for Sustainability?.....	3
2	Context	5
2.1	Policy and Governance	5
2.1.1	Agriculture.....	5
2.1.2	Built Environment	6
2.1.3	Species and Habitat	6
2.1.4	Water.....	7
2.1.5	Environmental Protection.....	7
2.1.6	Energy	9
2.1.7	Solid Waste	9
2.1.8	Health.....	10
2.1.9	Education	10
2.1.10	Poverty	10
2.2	An Overview of Huron County.....	10
2.2.1	Huron County's Origin	11
2.2.2	Geography	11

B Current Conditions

3	The State of Huron County.....	13
3.1	Economy.....	13
3.1.1	Business Retention and Expansion	15
3.1.2	Education and Training.....	15
3.1.3	Tourism.....	16
3.2	Transportation	17
3.2.1	Transportation Demand Management.....	22
3.2.2	Infrastructure and Services.....	23
3.2.3	Active Transportation.....	23
3.3	Agriculture.....	19
3.3.1	Diversity of Sector.....	19
3.3.2	Local Food.....	19
3.3.3	Sustainable and Niche Agriculture.....	20
3.3.4	Organic Farming.....	20
3.3.5	Other Agricultural Opportunities.....	20
3.3.6	Agriculture and Youth.....	21
3.4	Energy.....	22
3.4.1	Energy Conservation.....	24
3.4.2	Energy Generation	24
3.4.3	High School Green Teams	25

3.4.4	School Curriculum.....	25
3.5	Livable Communities.....	25
3.6	Natural Environment.....	26
3.6.1	Water Quality.....	27
3.6.2	Land Use.....	29
3.6.3	Wildlife.....	29
3.6.4	Huron Stewardship Council.....	29
3.6.5	Solid Waste Management.....	29
3.6.6	Air Quality, Climate Change, Pollution and Toxins.....	30
3.7	Population.....	31
3.7.1	Immigration.....	31
3.7.2	Income and Poverty.....	32
3.8	Downtowns.....	32
3.8.1	Heritage Protection Plans.....	33
3.9	Community Needs.....	33
3.9.1	Housing.....	33
3.9.2	Seniors.....	35
3.9.3	Public Safety.....	35
3.9.4	Communications.....	36
3.9.5	Education.....	36
3.9.6	Youth.....	37
3.9.7	Community Support Systems and Social Inclusion.....	38
3.9.8	Arts.....	39
3.9.9	Culture and Heritage.....	40
3.10	Healthy Active Communities.....	42
3.10.1	Recreation and Leisure.....	42
3.10.2	Health Care.....	43
3.10.3	Accessibility.....	44

C Reflections and Next Steps

4	Reflections.....	45
4.1	Strategic Planning Analysis.....	45
4.1.1	Strengths.....	45
4.1.2	Challenges.....	46
4.1.3	Opportunities.....	46
4.1.4	Priority Areas.....	47
5	Next Steps.....	48
5.1	Developing a Sustainability Plan.....	48
5.1.1	Performance Indicators and Monitoring Methods.....	49

Appendix

Appendix A: Information Review.....	51
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A

Background

1 Introduction

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

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

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

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

1.1 Report Scope and Format

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

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

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

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

PART A – BACKGROUND

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

PART B – CURRENT CONDITIONS

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

PART C - REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

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

1.2 Why Plan for Sustainability?

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

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

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

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

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

Climate Change Position Paper, AMO, 2010

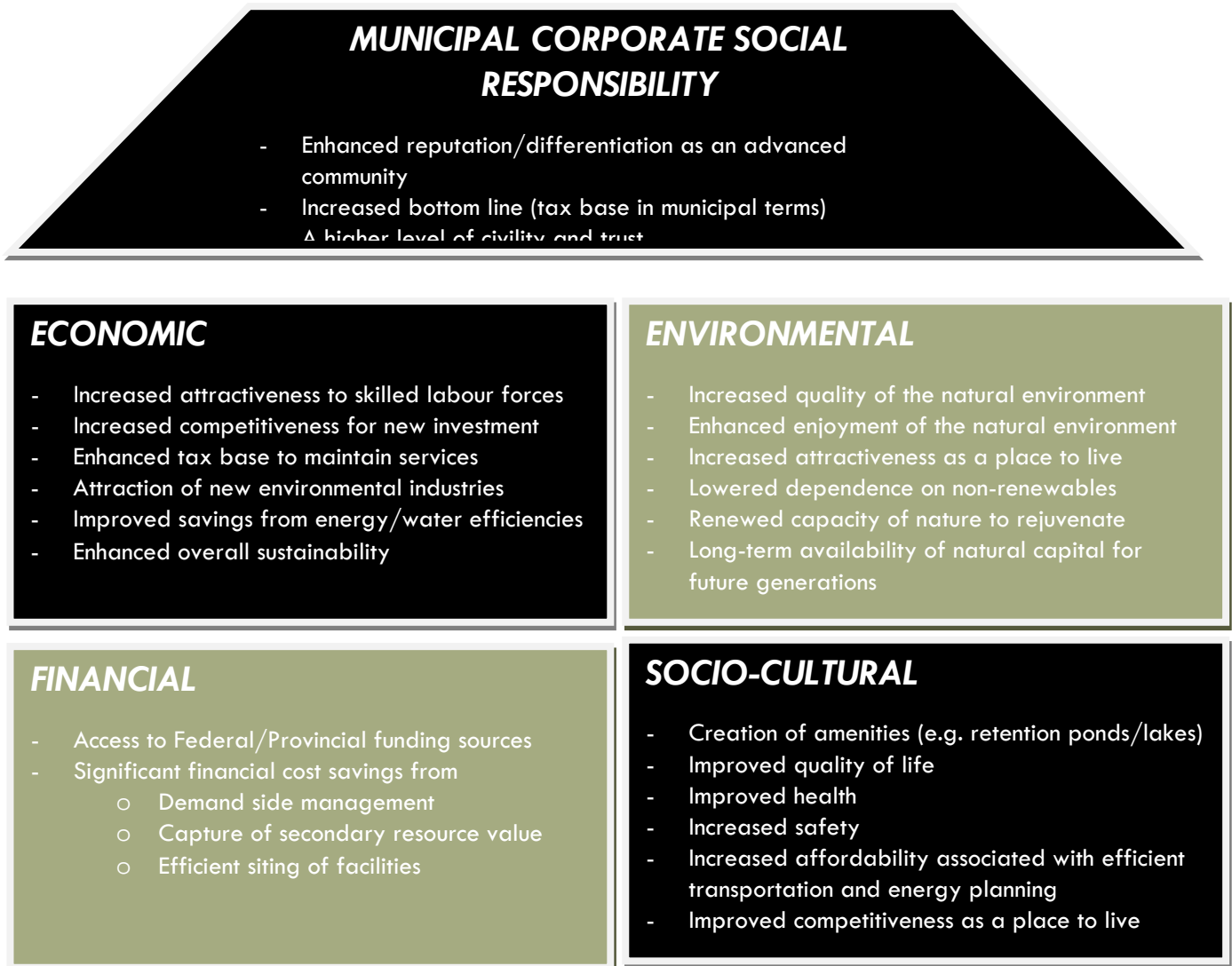
"Sustainability is about ensuring the long-term well-being of the planet, people, and economy. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Take Action for Sustainable Huron

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

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

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



2 Context

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

2.1 Policy and Governance

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.1.1 Agriculture

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

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

2.1.2 Built Environment

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

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

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

2.1.3 Species and Habitat

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

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

2.1.4 Water

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

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

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

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

2.1.5 Environmental Protection

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.1.6 Energy

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

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

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

2.1.7 Solid Waste

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

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

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

2.1.8 Health

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

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

2.1.9 Education

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

2.1.10 Poverty

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

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

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

2.2 An Overview of Huron County

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

2.2.1 Huron County's Origin

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

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

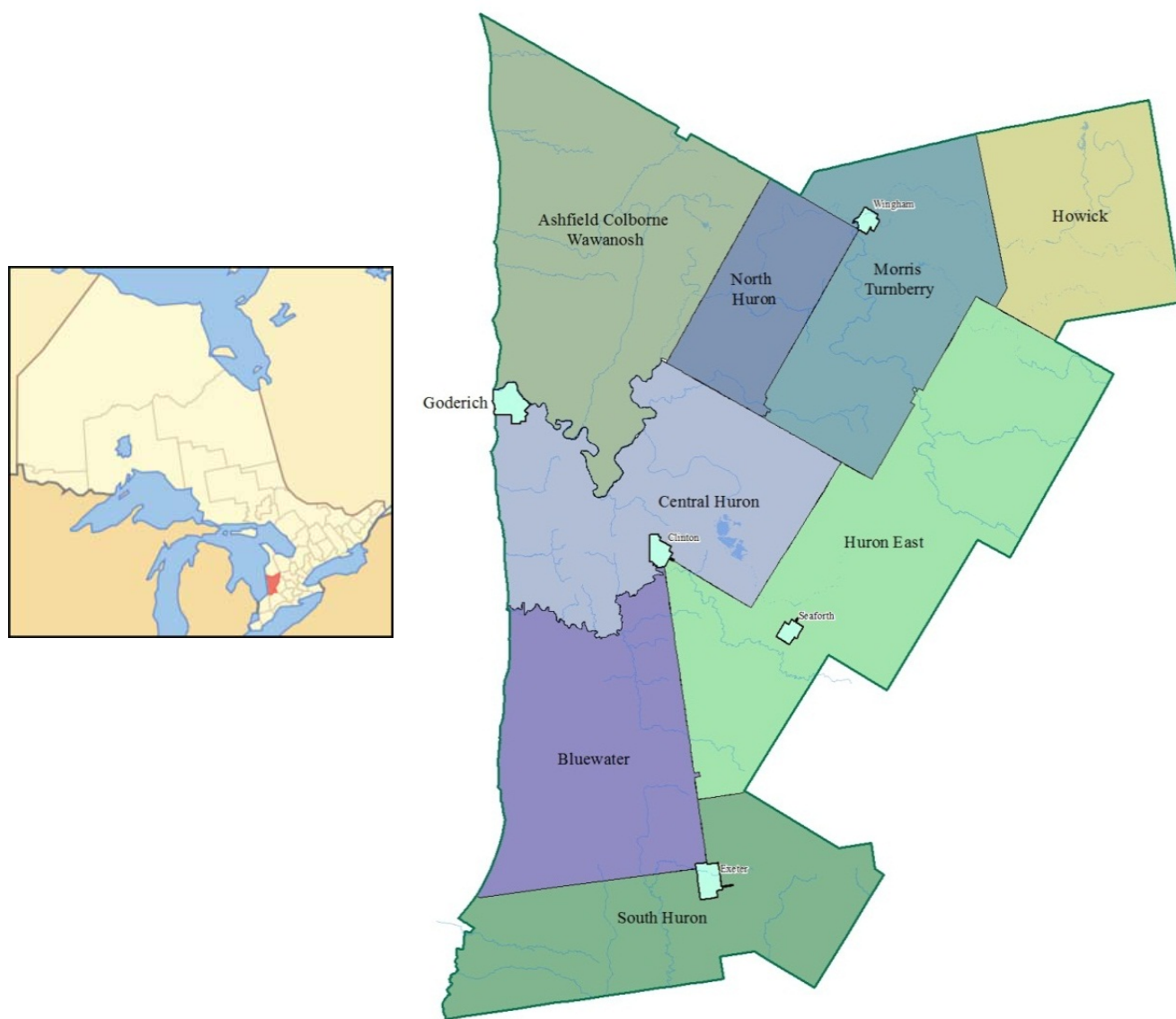
2.2.2 Geography

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

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

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

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



B

Current Conditions

3 The State of Huron County

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

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

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

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

3.1 Economy

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

Community Vision for the Economy:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.1 Business Retention and Expansion

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

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

3.1.2 Education and Training

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.3 Tourism

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.4 Manufacturing

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

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

3.1.5 Creative Economy

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

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

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

3.1.6 Retail and other Small Business

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

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

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

**Community Vision for
Agriculture:**

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

3.2 Agriculture

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

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

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

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

3.2.1 Diversity of Sector

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

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

3.2.2 Local Food

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

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

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

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

3.2.3 Sustainable and Niche Agriculture

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

3.2.4 Organic Farming

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

3.2.5 Other Agricultural Opportunities

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

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

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

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

3.2.6 Agriculture and Youth

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

3.3 Transportation

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

3.3.1 Transportation Demand Management

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

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

Community Vision for Transportation:

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

3.3.2 Infrastructure and Services

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

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

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

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

3.3.3 Active Transportation

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

3.4 Energy

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

3.4.1 Energy Conservation

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

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

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

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

3.4.2 Energy Generation

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

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

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

Community Vision for Energy:

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

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

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

3.4.3 High School Green Teams

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

3.4.4 School Curriculum

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

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

3.5 Livable Communities

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

Community Vision for Livable Communities:

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

3.6 Natural Environment

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

The 2007 Maitland Watershed Report Card identifies the following grades:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<p>Community Vision for the Natural Environment:</p> <p><i>In 2030, Huron County will have a healthy, resilient ecosystem with connected natural areas, clean water and diverse flora and fauna.</i></p>

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

3.6.1 Water Quality

Provincial and Municipal Policy Context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.6.2 Land Use

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

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

3.6.3 Wildlife

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

3.6.4 Huron Stewardship Council

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

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

3.6.5 Solid Waste Management

Provincial and Municipal Policy Context

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

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

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

Waste Diversion Plan and Targets

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

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

Recycling Programs

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

3.6.6 Air Quality, Climate Change, Pollution and Toxins

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.7 Population

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

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

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

3.7.1 Immigration

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

Community Vision for the Population:

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

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

3.7.2 Income and Poverty

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

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

3.8 D o w n t o w n s

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

Community Vision for Downtowns:

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

3.8.1 Heritage Protection

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

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

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

3.9 Community Needs

3.9.1 Housing

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

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

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

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

Community Vision for Community Needs:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2011)

3.9.2 Seniors

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

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

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

3.9.3 Public Safety

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.9.4 Communications

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

3.9.5 Education

Libraries

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Managing library service delivery
- Ensuring enough funding is available

Formal Education

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

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

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

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

3.9.6 Youth

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

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

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

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

- Summer Company Program
- CED Youth Internship Program

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

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

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

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

3.9.7 Community Support Systems and Social Inclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.9.8 Arts

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

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

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

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

3.9.9 Culture and Heritage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government of Ontario, Municipal Cultural Planning Brochure (2007)

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

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

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

Heritage

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

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

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

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

- Huron Historic Gaol
- Marine Museum
- Sky Harbour Gallery

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

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

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

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

Cultural Events and Activities

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

3.10 Healthy Active Communities

3.10.1 Recreation and Leisure

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

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

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

Community Vision for Healthy Active Communities:

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

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

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

3.10.2 Health Care

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.10.3 Accessibility

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

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



Reflections and Next Steps

4 Reflections

4.1 Strategic Planning Analysis

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

4.1.1 Strengths

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

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

4.1.2 Challenges

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

4.1.3 Opportunities

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

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

4.1.4 Priority Areas

Environmental priorities:

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

Community priorities:

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

Economic priorities identified in EDO Blueprint:

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

Other economic priorities:

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

Infrastructure priorities:

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

5 Next Steps

5.1 Developing a Sustainability Plan

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

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



COMMUNITY VISION

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

GOALS

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

STRATEGIES

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

ACTIONS

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



5.1.1 Performance Indicators and Monitoring Methods

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

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



Appendices

Appendix A: Information Review

PROVINCIAL DOCUMENTS

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

Ministry of Municipal Affairs - Performance Measures

County of Huron, 2008
Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh, 2008
Municipality of Central Huron, 2008
Town of Goderich, 2008
Howick Township, 2008
Huron East, 2006
Municipality of Morris-Turnberry, 2008
Municipality of South Huron, 2008

REGIONAL DOCUMENTS

Midwestern Ontario Regional Green Jobs Strategy, 2010

Official Plans

County of Huron, 1999
Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh, 2003
Municipality of Bluewater, 2001
Municipality of Central Huron, 2006
Municipality of Morris-Turnberry, 2006
Municipality of South Huron, 2009

Sustainability/Strategic Plans

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