

Healthy Rural Communities Tool Kit

A Guide for Rural Municipalities



A Locally Driven Collaborative Project
funded by Public Health Ontario

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The case studies and examples in this tool kit come from the experience of public health professionals, municipal planners and chief administrative officers (CAOs) of rural municipalities across Ontario. We hope that others can learn from their experience. Our sincere thanks go out to these professionals who gave their insights and time.

The views expressed in this publication are the views of the contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Public Health Ontario.

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A digital version of this document, and background
information is available at www.ruralhealthycommunities.ca.
The digital version of the text has embedded live web
links throughout the text - denoted by underlined
references. 'Section 6, Reference and Selected Resources'
also has several live embedded web references for the
readers' convenience.



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Definitions

Active Transportation – Active transportation is any form of human-powered transportation. It is any trip made for the purposes of getting yourself, or others, to a particular destination – to work, to school, to the store or to visit friends. Walking and cycling are the most popular forms of active transportation and are often combined with other modes, notably public transit (Transport Canada, 2011).

Affordable Housing – The concept of affordable housing includes balancing the cost of housing, rental and ownership, in relation to income earned. Affordable housing includes housing provided by the private, public and not-for-profit sectors as well as all forms of housing tenure (i.e. rental, ownership and cooperative ownership). It also includes temporary as well as permanent housing (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], 2014). The Government of Ontario provides a specific definition within the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement.

Capacity Building – Capacity is simply the ways and means needed to do what has to be done. It is much broader than simply skills, people and plans. It includes commitment, resources and all that is brought to bear on a process to make it successful. Community capacity building is based on the premise that community sustainability can be improved over time (Frank & Smith, 1999).

Climate Change – Changes in long-term weather patterns caused by natural phenomena and human activities that alter the chemical composition of the atmosphere through the build-up of greenhouse gases which trap heat and reflect it back to the earth's surface (Environment Canada, 2013).

Community Engagement – Community engagement is a process of involving, at various levels of participation, empowerment and capacity, groups of citizens affiliated by geographic proximity and/or special interest and/or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those citizens (Manitoba Family Services and Housing, 2008).

Infrastructure – The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads and power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).

Land Use Planning – Land use planning means managing our land and resources. It helps each community to set goals about how it will grow and develop and to work out ways of reaching those goals while keeping important social, economic and environmental concerns in mind. It balances the interests of individual property owners with the wider interests and objectives of the whole community (MMAH, 2013).

Natural Heritage – Natural heritage features include water, woodlands, wetlands, coastal wetlands and endangered and threatened species habitat (MMAH, 2014).

Revitalization – To revitalize means to imbue (something) with new life and vitality (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).



Section One: Introduction – A Look into Rural Communities

1.1 Why did we create this tool kit?

Rural communities are home to approximately one in five Ontario residents. These residents experience a unique environment and a unique lived experience that contribute to specific and often negative health outcomes. These health outcomes call for concerted action and responsive public policy. This tool kit offers a number of planning and development strategies that can help rural communities create a healthier community and in turn a healthier population.

This tool kit recognizes that low population density, an expansive rural landscape, and dispersed populations all challenge the notion of compact, mixed-use, complete communities. This unique spacial land arrangement presents a number of planning challenges. Planning processes can help to engage residents, leading to strategies and actions that can positively influence the built environment and the local economy.

Public Health Ontario funded the development of this tool kit, with input from the staff of numerous municipalities and health units from across the province. More than a third of Ontario's public health units participated on the Advisory Committee for this project.

Public health officials have a specific interest in healthy communities for many reasons, including the new built environment requirements in the 2008 Ontario Public Health Standards and the 2013 Ontario Public Health Sector Strategic Plan. In particular, there is a specific interest in fostering healthy rural communities through improvements to active transportation, air quality, access to affordable healthy food, injury prevention, climate change, safe and affordable housing, economic development and the greening of communities.

Planners share many of the same goals using somewhat different tools. Planners seek to improve quality of life for rural residents through innovation in land use planning policies, which can lead to improvements to the rural built environment. The 2014 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is one key document that guides planners in terms of policies in rural communities. By using Planning Act tools and non-regulatory initiatives in partnership with community members and health promoters, rural planners have the ability to contribute to the development of healthy rural communities.

1.2 Who should use this?

This tool kit is intended for use in rural communities. Municipalities, including planners, health unit staff and elected officials are the intended audience, although the tool kit will also help other interested community members advocate for healthier communities and populations. Overall, this tool kit is meant for those interested in how the built environment and local development impacts health.

It is recognized that there are a multitude of actions that could be taken to improve the health of residents in rural Ontario. This tool kit is intended to be user-friendly to rural community leaders, staff and members of the public. In addition to the text provided in this tool kit, the document also includes additional reference links to other support documents that may assist in clarifying information provided here.

It is recommended that users of this tool kit become familiar with provincial policy documents (for example the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans) and local municipal documents (for example Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws).



1.3 What are we trying to achieve?

This tool kit identifies land use and development strategies that can help to enhance the rural built environment and contribute to positive quality of life and health outcomes. The tool kit brings a rural lens to issues that are often viewed from an urban perspective. Numerous examples and innovative practices from across the province are profiled. This tool kit recognizes many characteristics associated with rural communities including a low density population, a declining population in some areas, aging citizens, youth out-migration, rural land uses and an economy that is significantly different from that of urban Ontario. The objectives of the tool kit are:

- To identify existing effective land use planning policies and models of practice for healthy rural built environments.
- To recognize the benefits of a coordinated approach to rural planning and development that uses a range of regulatory and non-regulatory tools.
- To identify innovative land use planning policies and initiatives that can contribute to healthy communities and healthy populations.



Section Two: Why Are Rural Health and Planning Important?

2.1 Rural issues

The built environment in rural communities is very different from that of an urban environment. There are unique challenges and issues that affect rural communities when considering the built environment and land use planning. Some of the differences are evident in the distances that people must travel to get to destinations, a smaller tax base that results in fewer financial resources for municipalities and the declining overall health of residents in rural and small town communities (DesMeules, M. & Pong, R., 2006).

As an example, transportation planning in rural communities is usually focused on infrastructure for automobiles. This is mostly due to the distances that people must travel from their homes to various destinations and reflective of the diffused low-density land use base (Young, 2008). As a result, there are fewer multi-use trails, sidewalks and bike lanes in rural areas, which decrease opportunities for residents to take part in active transportation. This is an unfortunate circumstance, as active transportation allows people to incorporate physical activity into their daily routine.

A lower tax base, due to the diffused low-density land use patterns, provides another challenge for rural municipalities, as property taxes are the main resources available for infrastructure and amenity development. Therefore, rural and small town communities must rely on more creative methods for acquiring resources.

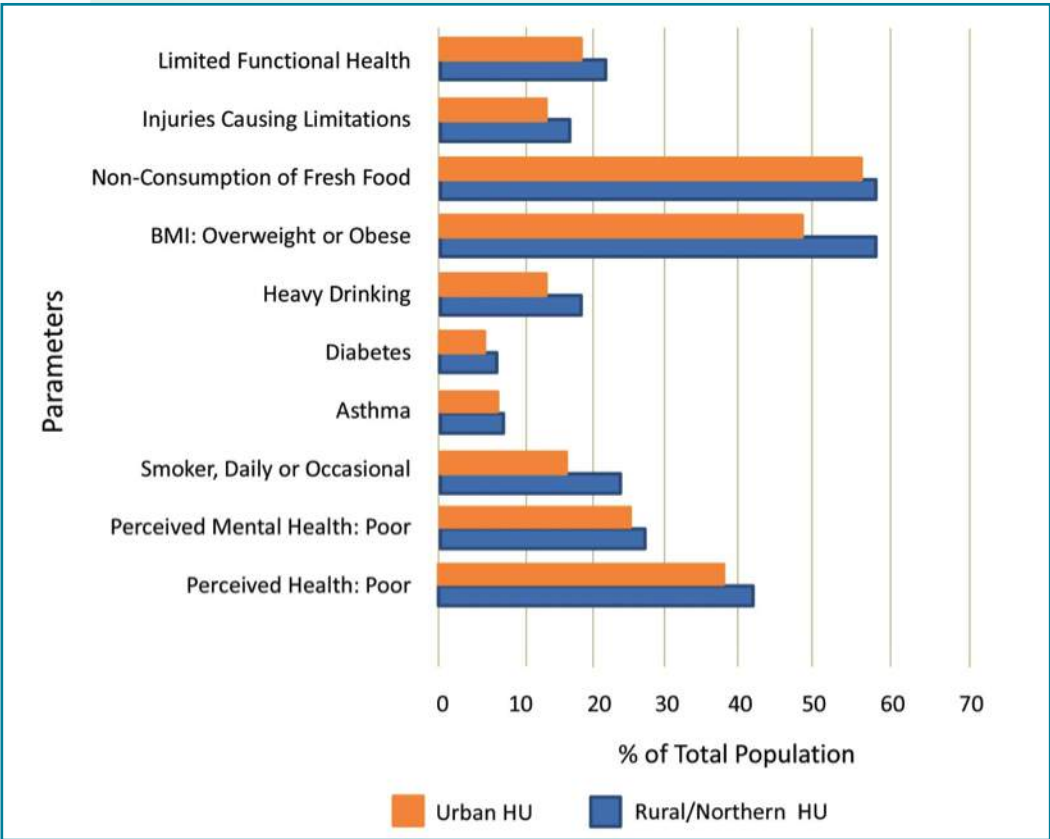
Another difference is that rural areas are at a general disadvantage when compared to urban areas for many health-related measures. Nationally, “Canada’s Rural Communities: Understanding Rural Health and its Determinants” initiative undertook an in-depth statistical analysis of various health risks and mortality rates between and amongst rural and urban populations (DesMeules & Pong, 2006). Health-related lifestyle factors such as smoking and obesity rates were higher in rural Canada, while leisure time and physical activity rates were lower.

These issues illustrate the need and importance of healthy rural built environments. Since rural communities are inherently different from urban ones, a unique approach is necessary when it comes to community design for healthy built environments in rural places.



The following graph developed using Statistics Canada data illustrates the health disparities between urban and rural communities. Residents in rural municipalities are at a disadvantage in all of the below parameters:

Health Parameter Comparisons for Ontario Urban and Rural Communities



Source: Statistics Canada 'Canadian Health Profile' – December 2013

Out of the 36 Health Units covering all of Ontario, the above survey results include the 13 most rural Health Units as compared to the 9 most urban Health Units in the province (as defined by Statistics Canada considering rural/urban population compositions). In general, urban Health Units can be defined as being from large urban centres, and the rural Health Units are those without large urban communities.

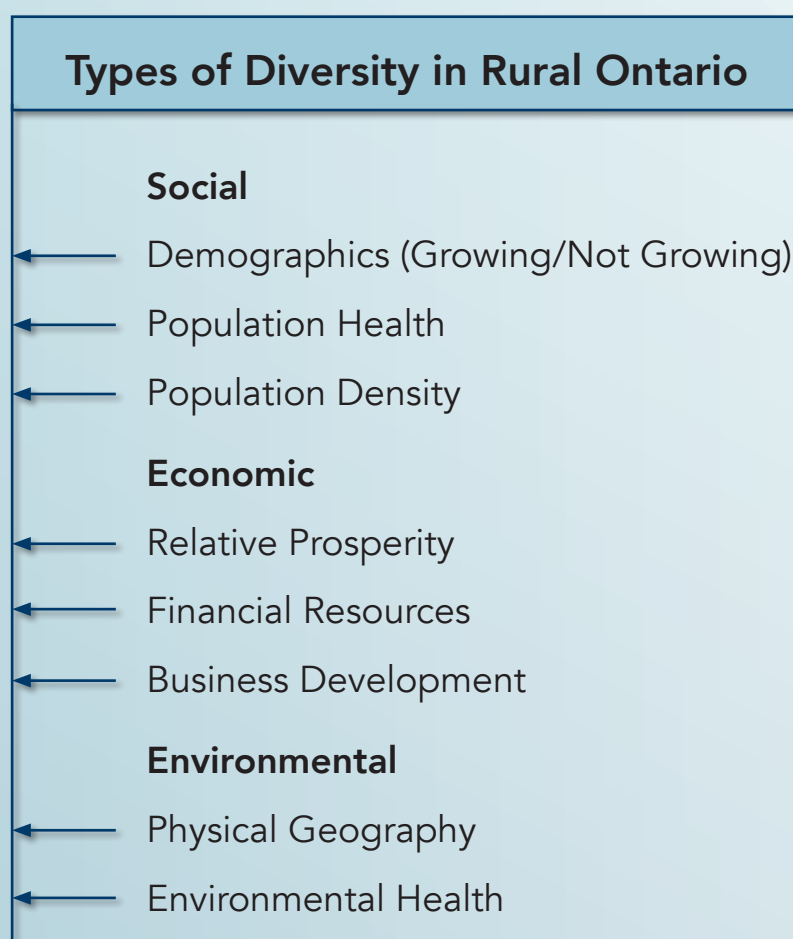
The above results target those parameters that point towards some of the specific challenges faced by rural communities.

2.2 Diversity Across Various Areas of the Province

Ontario is a geographically diverse province and has inherently different characteristics based on its varied regions. The extent to which a region is rural varies across the province; for example much of northern Ontario is comprised of the Canadian Shield with dispersed settlements, and southwestern Ontario has a significant agricultural base. There are also instances where rural areas are in close proximity to cities. Cottage properties and seasonal residents are also often found in rural communities.

How is rural Ontario diverse?

Within Ontario there are extremes in regards to population growth in municipalities. As an example, the Greater Toronto Area is forecast to grow significantly over the next 30 years, while other areas have lost populations and will struggle moving forward. Rural areas that are facing growth have different challenges from those which are losing population. One area will struggle to provide jobs and retain residents, while the other will have the challenge of managing growth. The following diagram illustrates the diversity found across rural Ontario:



2.3 Survey Reflections

A survey related to the topic of healthy rural communities was developed and used as a method to reveal innovative initiatives in rural municipalities. This survey was distributed to planners and public health professionals across Ontario through an on-line survey tool (Survey Monkey). All municipalities (except the City of Toronto) were included in the survey. Survey responses were received from both upper and lower tier municipalities in various parts of the province. The purpose of the survey was to inquire about views on what constitutes a healthy rural community. Respondents were encouraged to provide best practices from their municipalities.

A survey analysis of the most common words used in responses by municipal and public health unit officials was completed. ***Municipal planners and CAOs took an economic development approach*** when describing existing community best practices. ***Public health professionals expressed a social well-being and health-centred approach*** in terms of describing innovative initiatives in their communities. The results of the survey suggest that there are differences in approach taken by planners and public health officials to addressing health and wellness issues in a community. The word frequency images below showcase some of these differences (with the size of the words indicating the comparative number of times it was used in the survey responses).



Key words in municipal planner and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) survey responses



Key words in public health professional survey responses

Section Three: Rural Planning, Key Determinants of Health and Community Economic Development

3.1 What is rural planning?

Rural planning is the practice of planning for rural areas, with a focus on rural issues and from a rural perspective (implying an appreciation for the rural community, its needs and aspirations) – Caldwell, 2011, pg xvi

Rural planning involves a focus on land use planning; it also encompasses the local economy, labour and employment, demographics, community development, resource management and ecological protection. Planners often “adapt to and capitalize on parallel processes, relying on community initiatives as much as on legislated processes in the implementation of their initiatives” (Caldwell, 2011).

Community economic development is often the building block from which community initiatives are made possible. Community economic development involves planning, action implementation and then project evaluation. Some of the other components of community economic development include localization, building partnerships and capital, adapting to change and community engagement. Community economic development is also closely tied to citizen health, recognizing that social, economic and physical environments all influence health. Often, changes to social and physical environments and lifestyle may lead to more health improvements; these types of changes are often made possible through successful economic development.

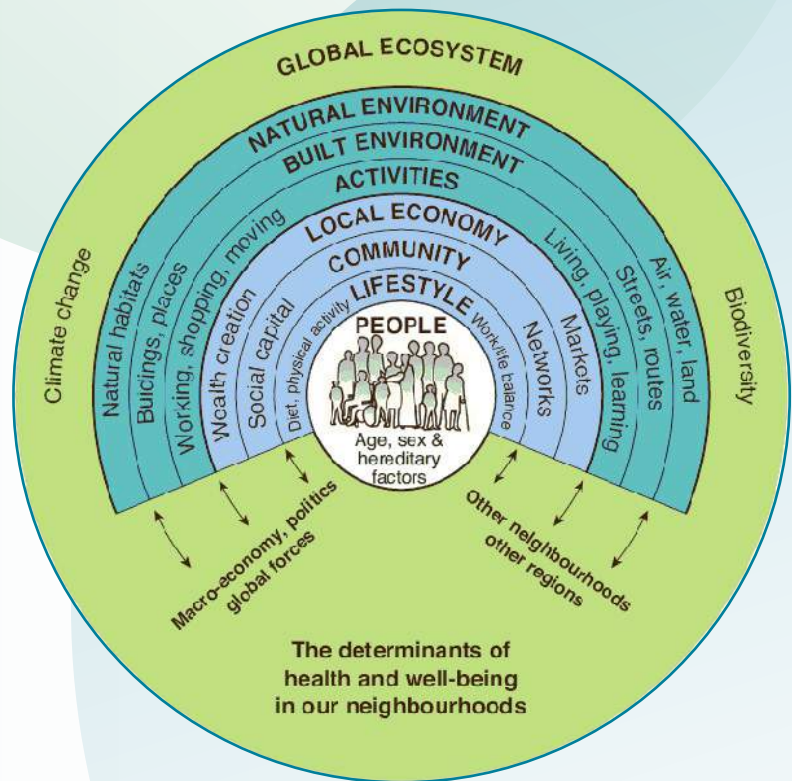


3.2 Key Determinants of Health

The Key Determinants of Health developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) focuses on defining the key factors influencing health, including health promotion and disease prevention as well as medical assets and infrastructure. The following is a listing of the twelve key determinants of health.

Key Determinants of Health, PHAC, 2013:

1. **Income and Social Status:** ability to access appropriate and safe housing, food, and health resources all impact on health.
2. **Social Support Networks:** support of family, friends, and community impacts health.
3. **Education and Literacy:** level of education influence job opportunities and income.
4. **Employment / Working Conditions:** job security in terms of having a steady job and a safe working environment impact health.
5. **Social Environments:** refers to the strength of social networks within a particular community.
6. **Physical Environment:** includes both the natural and human built environment.
7. **Personal Health and Practices and Coping Skills:** refers to a person's knowledge and behaviours (lifestyle habits) that may impact resiliency to change.
8. **Healthy Child Development:** includes factors that may influence early childhood development, including safe, positive pregnancies and parenting, and child friendly neighbourhoods.
9. **Biology and Genetic Endowment:** genetic endowment contributes to predisposition to certain diseases; biology may influence response to sources of stress whether physical or mental.
10. **Health Services:** access to appropriate services to restore, maintain, and promote health, and prevent illness.
11. **Gender:** level of gender equality may impact health.
12. **Culture:** language and beliefs influence people's behaviours, access to health information, and interaction with health system.



*The Determinants of Health
(Barton & Grant, 2006)*

Crucial to understanding the key determinants is that each factor does not exist in isolation. The health of an individual is a function of the interaction of all of these factors over time.

3.3 A Framework for Community Economic Development

Many municipalities across rural Ontario are experiencing population declines, and as a result new economic development initiatives are important. Improvements to infrastructure and amenities may help attract new community members and also improve the health of existing residents. Improved infrastructure includes the provision of health services, hospitals and clinics.

The diagram below illustrates the framework of community economic development.



The Roof

At the highest point of the house is quality of life, which is what community economic development is all about. Rural communities are engaging in community economic development in order to improve the lives of their families, friends and neighbours.

The Walls

Sustainability and creativity are two guiding principles or pillars that help rural communities think about how they want to undertake economic development. The pillars provide a mind-set or a way of thinking that will impact all of the decisions that need to be made. The concepts of sustainability and creativity in relation to community health and well-being are discussed further in the next section, Section 3.4.

The Foundation

The foundation of the house helps a community recognize who will take action. The foundation of the house is leadership –by the provincial government, municipal governments, citizens, organizations, business and others. Without leaders, community economic development simply will not happen. The impact of individual champions can be key to success.

The Rooms

The rooms of the house are the types of actions to take to improve economic conditions. Discussions in creating the various rooms are the building blocks of community economic development, planning, implementation and evaluation. Many municipal leaders feel that these activities go hand in hand. These are the before and after pieces which help you aim for and measure success.

Specific activities in the house are localization, building partnerships and capital, adapting to change and community engagement. Although different communities will choose to prioritize these building blocks in different ways, they are all important. Each community will decide how they will use these activities to its own benefit.

For more information please see:
Caldwell W.J. (2010) A Guide to Rural Community Economic Development: Best Practices for Your Community. School of Environmental Design & Rural Development, University of Guelph.



3.4 Principles Linking Rural Planning, the Key Determinants of Health and Community Economic Development

As identified in the previous section, Section 3.3, the following principles are key to health and well-being in rural communities.

Quality of life

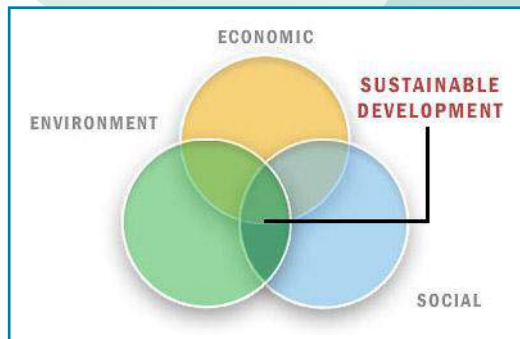
Many people see community economic development as a tool that contributes to quality of life in their communities. This study revealed that various actions occurring in rural communities contribute to economic development and therefore improve the well-being, health and quality of life of citizens. Some of these actions are taken with regard to community design and land use planning, active transportation, community engagement and aging communities as well as access to local food, green space, good air and water quality. These actions and further research findings will be discussed in the next chapter of this tool kit.

Sustainability

Sustainable development means meeting the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations.

For a rural community, sustainability ensures that development:

1. Is economically feasible,
2. Reduces or prevents environmental degradation and encourages stewardship and
3. Promotes equality and fairness.



Sustainability Diagram (Sustainable Development from Brundtland to Rio 2012 [2012])

Creativity

Creativity can mean:

- Trying out ideas that have not been tried before and embracing the gender, ethnic and age diversity found in your community;
- Challenging what has been the norm for a long time and allowing fresh perspectives on old problems and
- Valuing the creative and cultural assets of your community and being willing to include them in community economic development planning.

The creative economy is about building livelihoods around creative work – it is made up of individuals who are paid to think and create. This type of economy could include a vast array of creative workers such as senior management, business and finance professionals, health professionals, teachers and professors, professionals in art and culture and technical professionals in recreation; it could also include scientists, entrepreneurs, engineers, information technologists and farmers.

3.5 A Tool to Link It Together: A Municipal Checklist

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI)¹ and the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing have identified a checklist for action in their joint publication 'Planning by Design – A Healthy Communities Handbook' see: <http://ontarioplanners.ca/PDF/Healthy-Communities/2009/Healthy-Communities-Handbook.aspx> or <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page6737.aspx>. This checklist is a useful, succinct outline of actions to organize health/wellness planning activities and it is reproduced here with their permission.

Planning By Design



Municipal Checklist – Ideas to Execution

1. An Integrated Planning Process

Have you...

- ☐ **developed a list of people and organizations who can advise, support and facilitate your healthy-community initiative?** For example,
 - health/public health, social and law enforcement professionals
 - local businesses, including home-based (rural, agriculture and urban)
 - community groups and private citizens
 - developers with residential, institutional, commercial or industrial focus
 - architects, landscape architects, designers and engineers
 - transportation agencies, parks and recreation departments and community centres
 - non-profit organizations and government representatives.
- ☐ **identified potential partnerships and methods of outreach?** For example,
 - public, private and non-profit organizations.
- ☐ **developed communication strategies along with key messages that convey the rationale for a healthy-community initiative?**
- ☐ **developed agreed upon rules of conduct/terms of reference with your stakeholders?** For example,
 - respectful listening, learning and sharing.
- ☐ **considered developing a set of guiding community principles with stakeholders, partners and the community, as a starting point for understanding and addressing your local concept of a healthy and sustainable community?** For example, principles might establish:
 - a definition of healthy community that goes beyond the absence of disease or infirmity
 - a shared community vision based on cultural, historical, environmental, social and economic considerations
 - a focus on land-use change based on the planning and designing of buildings, streets and neighbourhoods in ways that are conducive to improved physical and psychological human health
 - expectations for inclusive community participation and partnerships
 - priority for investment in community assets and resources; enhancing health and reducing resources spent fixing preventable health problems; supporting local rural, agriculture and urban businesses; regional cooperation and coordination to maximize and share resources
 - a direction for clean, green and connected natural environments to improve air, water and soil quality and to promote sound environmental practices by individuals, households and businesses
 - a commitment to develop performance indicators, report cards, or dashboards to assess and monitor whether goals are being achieved and to provide timely, frequent and accurate information to partners, stakeholders and the public.
- ☐ **considered forms of public engagement that are likely to be effective for your area?** For example,
 - small workshops, kitchen table meetings, town hall meetings, online/door-to-door surveys, e-dialogues, social media (Facebook, YouTube, wikis), webcasts, design charrettes (for adults, youth or children), think tank sessions.

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¹OPPI is the recognized voice of the Province's planning profession. There are more than 4,000 members that work in government, private practice, universities, and not-for-profit agencies in the fields of rural and urban development, community design, environmental planning, transportation, health social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development. The members must meet quality practice requirements and are accountable to OPPI and the public to practice ethically and to abide by a Professional Code of Practice. For further information see: www.ontarioplanners.ca

Planning By Design



- ☐ **considered effective times for public engagement in your area?** For example,
 - day time, early evening or weekend.
- ☐ **identified approaches for inclusive participation?** For example,
 - forming small, diverse discussion groups versus large, like-minded discussion groups
 - consider including community members, partners or stakeholders in the delivery or facilitation of workshops
 - outreach strategies that focus on expanding ethno-cultural inclusion.
- ☐ **developed a consultation schedule in cooperation with your partners and stakeholders?**
- ☐ **ensured decisions flowing from this process reflect input from your partners, stakeholders and community?**
- ☐ **developed strategies for reliable communication, follow ups and information distribution to participants and the community?**

2. Community Assessment

Have you...

- ☐ **considered the spatial level to be focused on?** For example,
 - lot, building, block, street, neighbourhood, community, region or county.
- ☐ **decided on when to collect community input?**
- ☐ **identified sources for data collection?** For example,
 - census data
 - land-use mappings and inventories, geographic information system mapping, satellite imagery
 - air, water and soil quality data
 - community knowledge and memories
 - traffic collision, injury and fatality reports
 - crime reports
 - health information collected by governments and non-profit organizations
 - academic studies and peer-reviewed literature.
- ☐ **identified web-based sources of information on how various organizations and local governments are assessing their communities and charting their progress?** For example,
 - carbon footprint measurement tools
 - checklists for walkability, age-friendly features, active neighbourhoods and sustainable development
 - spread sheet models , such as transportation analyzers
 - health assessment tools.

Planning By Design



- ☐ **identified limits or barriers to change?** For example,
 - existing legislative and regulatory regimes
 - community sentiment or attachments
 - resources (funding, staffing, volunteers)
 - resistance to change
 - language
 - limited natural resources (water supply and arable land).
- ☐ **identified potential funding sources to help support your healthy-community initiative?**
- ☐ **evaluated local land-use planning policies, regulations, guidelines, programs and operations to determine if they support or inhibit your healthy-community goals?**
- ☐ **identified community strengths, weaknesses and opportunities?**
- ☐ **considered possible areas of focus, including demonstration initiatives?** For example,
 - mobility for all ages (walkways, cycling paths, buildings)
 - community safety (sidewalks, lighting, roads and road shoulders, traffic calming, traffic lights)
 - community amenities (street furniture, public art, public spaces)
 - environmental health (low-impact storm water design, cleanup of contaminated lands)
 - improved housing choices (targeted areas in need and energy efficiency)
 - transit corridor development (intensification of avenues, corridors and nodes)
 - children and youth activity (public playgrounds, cultural and recreational facilities)
 - main street improvements to support local businesses
 - infrastructure to support ultra-high speed communications (rural, agricultural and urban)
 - support for rural cycling (pothole repairs and paved road shoulders along identified routes)
 - policies and design guidelines that strengthen ethnic neighbourhoods
 - green procurement guideline for goods and services relating to municipal operations
 - healthy food access and security (urban gardens/farming, food market venues).
- ☐ **made decisions on what, when and how information and recommendations flowing from this process will be made known to the community?**
- ☐ **identified local champions to help with and support the promotion and maintenance of a health-friendly community agenda?**

3. Action Planning

Have you...

- ☐ **built on current community strengths and assets?**
- ☐ **built on community trust, capacity and engagement?**

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Planning By Design



- ☐ **identified actions to be taken to meet your goals and objectives?** For example,
 - integrating place-making design and architecture in high-activity areas
 - developing a regional recreational master plan that includes surrounding rural municipalities
 - preparing green development standards to guide new development
 - creating a financial-incentive program to stimulate retrofitting of buildings for energy efficiency (community improvement grant or loan program, development charge discounts, waivers of municipal fees for development applications or building permits)
 - concentrating a mix of uses within core areas (including rural village cores)
 - supporting area retail studies to guide future mixed-use considerations
 - developing municipal processes to facilitate and expedite development projects meeting sustainability development criteria.
- ☐ **considered various ways of meeting funding requirements?**
- ☐ **developed performance indicators to measure and monitor your progress?** For example,
 - time spent in vehicles to commute to work
 - unit length of sidewalks laid or replaced in targeted areas
 - percentage reduction in storm water storage (from a baseline)
 - percentage reduction in transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions (from a baseline)
 - total area of buildings retrofitted for energy efficiency
 - percentage change in transit and cycling mode share (less car usage)
 - number of heritage buildings conserved through adaptive reuse
 - number of new public art installations
 - percentage increase in pedestrian traffic in targeted areas
 - number of hospital visits related to respiratory illnesses (specified time period)
 - percentage decrease in employee absenteeism resulting from green buildings.
- ☐ **developed tools to assist in regular reporting on planned actions?** For example,
 - online carbon calculators
 - economic impact calculators
 - project dashboards
 - report cards.
- ☐ **developed communication strategies for regular reporting to your stakeholders and the community?**



Source: Waterfront Toronto – Sherbourne Park Fountains - Concept: Ultraviolet disinfection and bio-filtration of water before it enters Lake Ontario

Savings From High Performance

Cutting-edge projects today are incorporating high-performance development practices, such as low-impact stormwater design, green streets, reduced water landscape systems, and energy conservation and generation, allowing savings and environmental benefits from each system.

The Key to Sustainable Planned Communities, Sustainable Land Development Today, www.sldtonline.com

Section Four: Rural Land Use and the Built Environment

4.1 Planning tools

Ensuring that planning decisions enhance and protect the health and well-being of all citizens makes up a large role of municipalities. The Ontario Planning Act (Ontario Government, 1990) and the Provincial Policy Statement (Ontario Government, 2014) recognize the complex relationships among factors in land use planning and the built environment while offering clear guidance on the creation of healthy communities. Municipalities are required to implement provincial plans. They also implement land use policy using official plans and special purpose/functional plans. Other specific tools include: zoning, site plans and community improvement plans.



Provincial plans

In addition to the Provincial Policy Statement (2014), there are several provincial plans for specific areas of Ontario and these plans address specific issues affecting rural communities. The plans include: the Growth Plans for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (outer ring) and for Northern Ontario, the Oak Ridges

Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, Lake Simcoe Protection Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan, among others. There are also guiding documents that affect the planning system in a variety of ways; these include: Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy and Climate Ready: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2011–2014. Some of these plans impact the entire province, while others are regionally specific. Community decision makers need to be aware of these plans, as they provide provincial directions to be included in local municipal planning documents.

Official plans

Municipalities enhance and protect communities through the development of official plans; municipalities must develop these plans and review them every five years. An official plan is a legislative document that sets out long-term land use policy for growth and development in a municipality (HPECHU, 2012). An official plan provides direction for development over a minimum twenty-year period while taking into consideration a wide range of social, economic and environmental conditions that are important in building a healthy, safe and sustainable community. An official plan usually includes a set of goals and objectives along with a conforming set of specific land use policies and accompanying schedules (Ibid.). Official plans are a form of policy and direction at a community scale, and are created with community input. Official plan formulation needs to comply with the provincial Planning Act and other applicable law.

Goals related to public health are usually incorporated into official plans in order to make health one of the overarching goals of a plan (Canadian Institute of Planners – CIP, 2012). In addition, official plans often provide guiding design policy associated with certain aspects of a community. For example, in new residential infill or subdivision plans, a requirement for development walkability and other active design elements may be outlined.



Special purpose/functional plans

Functional plans are a key component to municipal planning; they are generally non-regulatory and often relate to specific topic areas. These types of plans offer more specific policy direction and strategies. Functional plans often deal with topics such as cycling and pedestrian movement (Active Transportation Plans), recreation (Recreation, Parks & Open Space Plans) and food systems (Food & Agriculture Strategies). Comparable to an official plan, a functional plan should have a clear description relating the topic area to health and, where possible, should reference related health goals in the official plan (CIP, 2012).

Active transportation plans, a type of functional plan, are being created by municipalities as communities realize the importance of walking and cycling to attain their public health goals. These types of plans also assist in efforts of a municipality to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions as well as provide new travel options in a community. Places with a large number of people travelling by foot and bicycle can inspire more opportunities for regular social interaction. "In the case of seniors, active living can prolong independent functioning by compressing the impairment period and diseases typically associated with aging. Physically active older adults tend to be one or two decades younger physiologically than their sedentary counterparts" (ibid, pg 23). All of these ideas are illustrative of how a functional active transportation plan can fit within a larger policy planning framework.

Functional plans that concentrate on parks and recreation or on open space and natural areas look at opportunities for recreation as well as environmental health. Recreation and parks master plans evaluate existing assets available to a community and identify new resources needed to keep up with community growth and change (ibid). This may involve various types of parks (such as athletic and sport field parks, community parks or dog parks), trails and recreation facilities. "Plans for Open Space and Natural Heritage Areas" focus more on spaces selected for environmental conservation, wildlife habitat preservation, watercourse protection, management of hazardous areas and view protection" (ibid, pg 27).

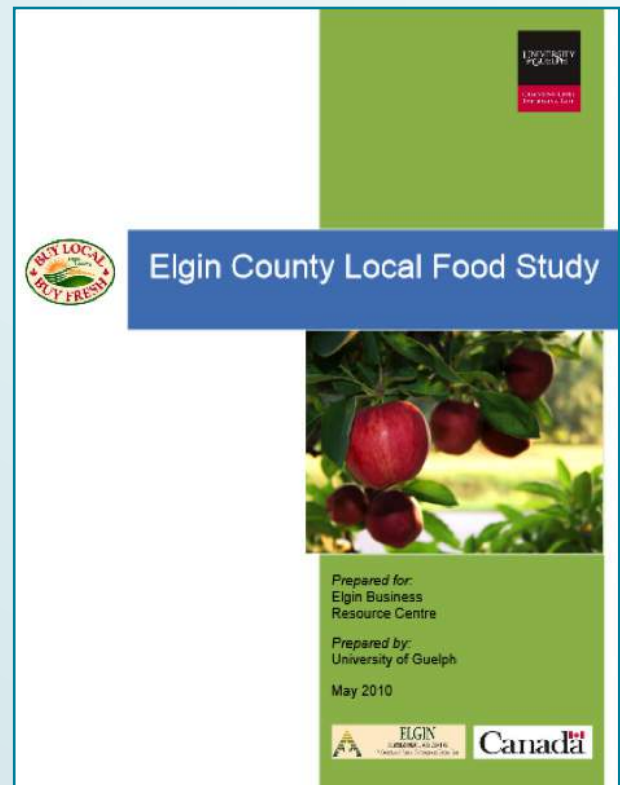
Food systems are a fundamental component of community health. "Whether through traditional or non-traditional means, the ways in which food is produced, processed, transported, distributed, celebrated and disposed of play a key role in the health of community members" (ibid, pg 29). Whether it be promoting a community's artisanal food reputation in order to attract visitors, addressing emergency resilience through a more self-sufficient food system, bringing healthier food options to food deserts in low-income neighbourhoods or drawing on the significant economic power of farming, functional plans that focus on planning for the success of the food and agriculture in a community are important contributors to its health.

Zoning

The relevance of land-use zoning to public health lies in the origin of zoning as an instrument to promote public health, safety and well-being (Caldwell, 2011). A zoning by-law controls the use of land in a community. It states exactly:

- how land may be used
- where buildings and other structures can be located
- the kind of buildings that are permitted and how they may be used
- lot sizes and dimensions, parking requirements, building heights and setbacks from the street (MMAH, 2013).

Zoning by-laws implement official plan policy through specific regulations and provisions. They contain specific requirements that are legally imposable. Construction or new development that does not comply with a zoning by-law is not allowed, and the municipality will decline issuing a building permit. Many municipalities have a comprehensive zoning by-law that divides the municipality into different land use zones with detailed maps. The by-law specifies the permitted uses (e.g. commercial or residential) and the required standards (e.g. building size and location) in each zone. A zoning by-law provides a legal way of managing land use and future development and protects residents from incompatible and possibly dangerous land uses in a community.



Site plan control agreements

The Ontario Planning Act provides a number of tools to regulate land use development in Ontario and sets out the statutory outline under which these tools are to be used. Section 41 sets out regulations for site plan control and provides municipalities with a broad scope of authority when dealing with the approval of plans and drawings for development within site plan control areas. In terms of Section 41 of the Planning Act, site plan control provides a process by which to approve plans or drawings associated with development. The approval process is meant to be a technical review that solves issues such as building layout, massing, access, parking and landscaping in order to make certain that development proceeds in a safe, effective and visually pleasing manner. Municipalities implement Section 41, and expand on certain features, through their official plan and site plan control by-law (Ontario Association of Architects, 2013).

Community improvement plans

Community improvement planning, a tool with provisions found in the Planning Act, can help municipalities address challenges. This tool provides a means of planning and financing development activities that efficiently use, reuse and restore lands, buildings and infrastructure (MMAH, 2008).

Municipalities are now using community improvement plans in more inventive ways. Community improvement plans are being created to address growth management challenges, intensification, energy efficiency, mixed-use and transit/bicycle oriented development, accessibility and the emerging needs of an aging population. Some municipalities are using community improvement plans as an incentive for boosting development that meets recognized environmental standards, such as LEED®, while others use them to attract certain kinds of employment uses. Regional community improvement plans can enable the development of regional infrastructure, including transportation corridors and affordable housing.



4.2 Ten things to do: A focus on process

There are opportunities in planning to facilitate healthy rural communities. The following list are mechanisms that can help to create healthy rural communities, and can be used by any municipality that is working toward developing healthy initiatives.

1. Develop planning documents for individual towns and hamlets such as an official plan and other associated functional plans.

This mechanism involves developing a policy document that fits the unique characteristics of a specific community. This type of document ensures that communities have policies that fit their community characteristics. A plan is a useful mechanism to direct municipal budgeting and potential new funding from other sources in new project implementation.

2. Understand and explain that planning initiatives may have related health, social and environmental benefits.

Demonstrate multiple benefits of an initiative (health, environmental, social and economic) in the event that one benefit may not be enough to 'sell' the project. This will also necessitate working in partnership. The co-benefits of an initiative should be acknowledged in order to create good working partnerships. Understanding co-benefits can encourage synergies in an initiative between different interest groups.

3. Measure the impact and change of a planning initiative or practice on a community.

Measure the baseline conditions of a practice and continue to document any changes over time when new practices are being implemented. This action needs to be tailored to the capabilities and resources available to the municipality, for example, financial, person power.

4. Build partnerships between municipalities, agencies and the community (for example, community groups and service clubs).

This could expand the capacity of the municipality and also provide an opportunity for education and working together. Workshops and community events have the ability to educate through collaboration. Members of the community could be educated on certain topics as well as provide education in areas in which they are knowledgeable.



5. Ensure there is collaboration between the municipality (administration, planners and politicians) and health unit.

When municipalities and health units collaborate, there is the opportunity to achieve more through pooling resources. There is also the possibility to generate a greater number of ideas through collaboration. This is increasingly made possible when both organizations understand each other's terminology and goals. It would also be beneficial to extend this collaboration to engineering, public works, parks and recreation and forestry.

6. Engage the community by creating creative approaches to establishing dialogue and opportunities for community members to contribute when exploring new initiatives.

Creating environments where community members feel comfortable sharing and collaborating is essential, as this is the best way in which to learn from one another. In a safe environment, new and innovative ideas are more likely to spark and be successful. It is important to develop mechanisms that allow everyone to be part of community initiatives and reach out to residents for commentary and input.

7. Ensure council and senior municipal staff support.

New projects are more likely to acquire public funding so they can move forward if council and municipal staff are supportive. This also encourages fundraising and private donations. Work with the municipal council to ensure that they are familiar with the relationships between planning initiatives, health, the environment and economy. Ensure that your community leadership involves strategic initiatives that provide vision and opportunities to establish the potential of new partnerships.

8. Find project champions. A champion could be an individual, group, local politician or municipal staff member.

A dedicated individual who is willing to see a project through to completion contributes significantly to a positive outcome. This individual has the power to motivate others to participate in an initiative and provide ideas. It is also advantageous to have a staff member who has responsibility on a specific initiative or topic.

9. Find a committee or community-based group that is passionate about the initiative.

The likelihood of success for a particular initiative increases when there is a committee or community-based group advocating for it. A committee is able to provide motivation, credibility, people power, and the resources to make changes in a community. Municipalities must consider funding for these groups.

10. Focus on something manageable and have a realistic message for the community.

When embarking on an initiative, it is important to have a realistic and achievable goal, such as working within one area of a community. The extent of an action or idea needs to be reflective of the resources available in the particular community. For example, promoting active transportation in a city means something different than in a rural area. Also, this could mean working on only a portion of a rural community to begin with in order to achieve results and experience success. This would also encourage future work, as positive results would foster the desire to continue with a particular initiative.



4.3 Thirteen actions: A focus on municipal planning

Through the research conducted for this tool kit, the following thirteen key mechanisms for action in rural municipalities were revealed:

1. Community Design and Land Use Planning
2. Active Transportation
3. Community Engagement and Capacity Building
4. Water Quality
5. Air Quality
6. Tourism
7. Planning for Special Age Groups
8. Agriculture
9. Cultural Strategies and Revitalization
10. Access to Local Food
11. Nature
12. Safe and Affordable Housing
13. Climate Change

The items listed above were revealed through project research methods; these included surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with municipal planners and public health professionals. The above thirteen actions form the key findings for this tool kit.

When undertaking municipal initiatives, communities can work to address the thirteen actions. An easy way to use the following action items is to identify an issue or initiative that best suits the needs of your community. There is also an appendix at the end of this tool kit which gives further detail on innovative initiatives that were identified through the research.

The discussion for each of the following thirteen actions is organized as follows:

- a. why the action is important;
- b. key points from the research (literature review and interesting case studies); and
- c. recommendations.

A portion of the research findings listed in this section is derived from the literature review "*Healthy Rural Communities: Strategies and Models of Practice*" that was completed as part of this project. This document is available at www.ruralhealthycommunities.ca.



Action One - Community Design and Land Use Planning

Why are community design / land use planning important?

- They help to build robust communities by managing and directing land use to achieve healthy, liveable and safe communities.
- They help to create communities as good places to live, work, learn and play in close proximity to one another.
- They promote complete and compact settlements. This is applicable in rural areas where the revitalization of existing towns, villages and hamlets is encouraged. Some communities must deal with populations that are even more widely dispersed. These include places where large-scale agriculture, natural regeneration of poorer agricultural land and recreational properties compose substantial amounts of land. Complete and connected communities located in these areas need other creative responses – for example, high speed internet connectivity and the provision of secondary road or waterway networks (MMAH, 2014).
- The creation of community design guidelines clarify the meaning of general official plan policies and put these policies into practice for new development in a community.

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- Activity destinations and facilities, whether they be a naturalized trail system, dedicated bike paths or lanes, children's park or a formal recreational facility (such as soccer fields, swimming pools etc.) should be adequately distributed throughout a community, making access to such facilities as equitable as possible.
- New streets should have good connectivity with the existing street pattern. In addition, sidewalks should have clear connections to trail systems within a community.

City of Kawartha Lakes case study

- The City of Kawartha Lakes has recently developed a variety of land-use planning documents that focus on creating active and healthy rural communities.
- Activating Kawartha Lakes was an on the ground initiative where the community was invited to take part in walking audits with a walkability consultant to build on the policy work completed to date. These walks and the resulting photo visions of specific sites proved to be successful and provided inspiration for the implementation of more walkable and active design elements in the community. To view photo visions, please see: [City of Kawartha Lakes Photo Visions](#).



Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Ensure that your official plan includes policies related to healthy communities. Specific examples include active transportation, air quality, walkability and parks and recreation facilities, among others. Use the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement to help inform policies in your official plan, as it is a tool that promotes health and wellness in all communities. For another resource example, please see: [Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Healthy Community Design: Policy Statements for Official Plans](#)
2. Develop appropriate community design guidelines that can assist in implementing the Official Plan and reflect unique community conditions and characteristics. These guidelines can help to ensure that development and retrofitted development achieve broader healthy community actions. See for example: [Town of Collingwood Urban Design Manual](#)
3. Tips from practitioners:
 - Consider using resources such as the Region of Peel Health Assessment Tool, which identifies the public health impact of built environments. The tool has the goals of developing healthier communities and increasing the walkability of neighbourhoods in order to encourage active living. Please see: [Region of Peel Health Assessment Tool](#)

Other resources

- City of Kawartha Lakes (2013) [Our Kawartha Lakes: Integrated Community Sustainability Plan](#).
- City of Kawartha Lakes (2013) [Official Plan Amendment and Secondary Plans](#).
- Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit – HPECHU (2012) [Building Complete and Sustainable Communities: Healthy Policies for Official Plans](#).
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - MMAH (2014) [An Introduction to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014: Rural Ontario](#).



Action Two - Active Transportation

Why is active transportation (AT) important?

- It provides the opportunity for physical activity when travelling for both daily needs and recreational purposes.
- Active transportation has the ability to provide many co-benefits such as tourism, economic development and social equity, allowing all members of the community to potentially use the facilities.
- While sidewalks and bike lanes may not be feasible in many dispersed rural land areas, other opportunities such as wide paved shoulders may be useful for biking. While commuting by bike is seldom feasible, many rural residents enjoy the recreational aspects of cycling and walking. Therefore, it is important to encourage AT in rural areas. Often there are many trail network resources available in a rural setting, i.e. low traffic secondary roads, former rail beds etc.
- AT can also realize the goals of reducing local air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, and provide climate protection (CIP, 2012).

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- Many rural communities are developing multi-use trails on abandoned railway corridors; these trails often connect various towns and hamlets. Please see the [Grand River Rail Trail](#) examples.

Haliburton case study

- Haliburton and other communities have widened shoulders on county roads; some jurisdictions have also done this on provincial highways in order to accommodate bicycles.
- AT initiatives have been successful in Haliburton due to community-based research; community forums; advocates for supportive policies, education and awareness activities and the development of planning documents.
- AT initiatives are focused in the Villages of Haliburton and Minden.
- The AT projects were focused on the villages in order to make implementation more manageable and achievable.

Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Work to ensure that you have an active transportation (AT) plan that considers broad county- and region-wide initiatives and connections between municipalities and communities as well as infrastructure improvements such as wider road shoulders or bike lanes. See for example: [Huron County Active Transportation Plan \(Draft\)](#)
2. It is important to develop an AT strategy at the lower-tier municipal level. Ensure that the strategy is appropriate for the size of your community. See for example: [Active Transportation Plan for the Village of Minden](#)
3. Tips from practitioners:
 - Engage a committee or community-based group that is passionate about AT.
 - Focus on something manageable, such as working within one area of a community to start.
 - Promote the relationship between AT, economic development, cultural planning and health outcomes (physical activity, air quality and injury prevention). Recognizing these co-benefits can help encourage funding and implementation.
 - Seek out opportunities for trail development that has desired destination locales and that can provide an interconnected network of linking facilities. Consider the use of various resources, including abandoned rail lines, crown land/public land holdings, utility corridors, road allowances etc.
 - Integrate AT into other planning actions that a municipality may be interested in, e.g. transportation planning, parks and recreation plans, downtown revitalization plans etc.
 - Apply for [Bike and/or Walk Friendly Communities designation](#).

Other resources

- Communities in Action (2013) [Making Haliburton County a Healthy, Active Community through Active Transportation Planning](#).
- Canadian Institute of Planners - CIP (2012) [Healthy Communities Practice Guide](#).
- Haliburton Highlands Cycling Coalition (2013) [Share the Road](#).
- Ministry of Transportation (2012) [Cycle ON Ontario's Cycling Strategy](#).
- Ontario Professional Planning Institute (2012) [Healthy Communities and Planning for Active Transportation](#).



Action Three - Community Engagement and Capacity Building...

Why are community engagement and capacity building important?

- The community is an important resource to help achieve mutual goals, and community engagement increases municipal capacity. Municipalities can leverage the expertise and knowledge of community members on a volunteer basis.
- Community engagement provides the perspectives of citizens, both as individuals and collectively.
- Engagement and participation are vital in creating effective policy and programs for community health that are inclusive and holistic.

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- Engagement activities provide a forum for citizens and other stakeholders to voice their opinions and ideas, share local knowledge, learn from others and obtain important information. This allows the opportunity to involve people in the processes and decisions that affect their lives. Empowered people and communities can be more resilient in the face of adversity (CIP, 2012).
- In Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands, workshops are organized for farmers in order to learn about economic strategies, specifically related to agriculture.
- Some rural communities are using social media to engage and connect with residents. As an example, Elgin County has created a Facebook page and Twitter account for their Community Improvement Plan. As well, the Village of Brussels in Huron County has a Facebook page to update residents on events and initiatives occurring in the community. Please see: [Elgin County Community Improvement Plan](#) and [Brussels Downtown Revitalization Group](#)

Huron County case study – Jane’s Walk

- Jane’s Walk was a community-organized event where residents walked around downtown Goderich and discussed design elements that could improve the community.
- Jane’s Walk was innovative for a rural community because it originated as an urban idea and was implemented in a rural downtown area.
- Jane Jacobs, an urbanist who helped to protect neighbourhoods in Toronto and New York, provided inspiration for the walks, which are held around the world. Jane was an activist for people places and wrote about how cities can function as spaces for people.

Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Use creative ways to engage the public in the planning process in addition to the Planning Act requirements. As an example, Haldimand County hired a skateboard professional to give credibility and information on public spaces for youth.
2. Leverage non-traditional organizations as partners involved with public health, recreation, engineering, business and youth.
3. Seek additional funding and foster public and private partnerships.
4. Tips from practitioners:
 - Develop safe spaces where people can engage with each other.
 - Build council support through education and awareness. This helps new projects acquire public funding and encourages fundraising and private donations.
 - Engage champions for projects – a dedicated individual who is willing to see a project through contributes significantly to a positive outcome.
 - Employ creative approaches to encourage citizen engagement which could include informal public gathering mechanisms, such as coffee shop settings and design charettes.
 - Use social media to connect with a wide range of citizens. Social media tools can include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Other resources

- Ball, J., Caldwell, W., & Pranis, K. (2010). Doing Democracy with Circles: Engaging Communities in Public Planning
- Canadian Institute of Planners - CIP (2012) [Healthy Communities Practice Guide](#).



Action Four - Water Quality

Why is water quality important?

- Water provides economic and social benefits and is the basis for healthy and diverse ecosystems and communities. Water is used by humans for consumption and by industry to support our economy. It also supports ecological processes including aquatic life and aquatic ecosystems (MMAH, 2014).
- In rural areas, sources of drinking water can come from surface water features or groundwater aquifers, and these sources are vulnerable to contamination or depletion. Drinking-water wells and intakes serve individual homes, clusters of homes and rural settlement areas.
- Healthy shorelines provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits. They help to control surface run-off and erosion and filter associated nutrients and harmful pollutants, therefore protecting water quality. Healthy shorelines also help regulate temperature and microclimate, screen noise and wind, preserve the aesthetic appeal of the landscape and provide many other cultural, social and economic benefits through recreation and tourism (MMAH, 2014).

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- There are many threats to drinking water quality, including both point sources and non-point sources contaminants. Effective stormwater management, including techniques such as installation of pervious surface treatments, can reduce the potential for contamination from surface run-off during storm events.
- For existing private well and septic system owners, the promotion of well stewardship and the need for support of stewardship programs is apparent.

Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls case study

- The community of Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls is a small northern community that began implementing new zoning by-laws, never used before in their municipality, in order to maintain and improve water quality.
- Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls added policies to their official plan relating to shoreline protection. A new implementing zoning by-law has established a minimum setback from shorelines for new development.

Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Work with the conservation authority if it exists for your region to ensure that your source water protection plan is being properly incorporated. Efforts to support clean drinking water supplies through source water protection planning and other mechanisms (e.g. mandatory septic system re-inspection by-laws) are important. Please see [Drinking Water Source Protection](#).
2. Work with the conservation authority to ensure that planning efforts can incorporate a focus on watersheds/sub-watersheds. This can contribute to an ecologically-focused approach to protecting water resources and other natural features.
3. For existing brownfields (such as abandoned heavy industrial sites), ensure that your community has considered various mechanisms to have these sites cleaned up. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has a large number of resources to aid with this. See for example [Brownfields Resources](#).
4. Work with your health unit and building permit staff to ensure that you are following best practices related to public and private sewage treatment. As an example, Huron County has started a septic system maintenance program. Please see: [Healthy Lake Huron](#)
5. A number of municipalities have developed lake plans. These are created to protect the water quality of lakes and assess lake impacts and carrying capacity. See for example: <http://www.lakeplan.com/>

Other resources

- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - MMAH (2014) [An Introduction to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014: Rural Ontario](#).



Action Five - Air Quality

Why is air quality important?

- The quality of air affects all citizens living in a community.
- Air pollution has become increasingly evident in municipalities across Canada (MOE, 2007).
- Children, seniors and those with existing heart and lung conditions (like asthma) are particularly at risk due to exposure to air pollution.

What did we learn from the research?

- During extensive smog episodes, the United States contributes as much as ninety percent of ozone (excluding background local area levels) to Ontario cities and towns on the northern shore of Lake Erie, the eastern shore of Lake Huron and in the extreme southwest near the U.S. border (MOE, 2005, 2011).
- Municipalities across Canada are developing strategies to tackle air quality at the local level. Idle-free initiatives are a simple and economical action that local governments can immediately take to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. When a vehicle's engine is turned off instead of idling, not only does this reduce GHG emissions, but saves fuel as well. Please see [Idle Reduction By-law](#).
- Municipalities in rural Ontario have been taking initiative with regards to the anti-idling of vehicles. This includes the Town of Huntsville with an anti-idling educational brochure and by-law, as well as the Town of Bracebridge, which has developed a by-law to regulate the idling of vehicles.

Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Develop official plan policies that encourage the reduction of air pollution through changes in the built environment. This could include the requirement of adequate separation distances between major traffic corridors and industrial sources of air pollutants and sensitive land uses such as residential areas, daycare centres and schools. Another measure is to encourage new developments that support walking and cycling or the retrofit of existing developments to include paths and trails that may be used by pedestrians or cyclists.
2. Ensure the creation of an anti-idling by-law in your municipality in order to directly reduce air pollution. For examples please see: [Huntsville Anti-Idling](#) and [Bracebridge Anti-Idling](#)
3. Ensure the development of an open air burning by-law in your municipality in order to further reduce air pollution. Open Air Burning is an important rural issue that impacts human health. Please see: [Model Municipal Code of Practice for Open Air Burning in Ontario](#)

Other resources

- Ministry of the Environment – MOE (2007) [EcoAction: Action on Climate Change and Air Pollution](#).
- Ministry of the Environment – MOE (2005) [Transboundary Air Pollution in Ontario \(2005\)](#).
- Ministry of the Environment - MOE (2011) [Air Quality Annual Report](#).
- [NRCAN Idle Free Zone website](#).



Action Six - Tourism

Why is tourism important?

- In many rural areas tourism-based businesses and services are an important sector of the economy.
- Tourism has the ability to improve the quality of life and well-being of residents and visitors. It can enhance the use of a community's natural assets, character and cultural attributes.

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- The Eastern Ontario Trail Alliance has developed innovative art and heritage trails to attract residents and visitors. The trails have been developed based on various themes; one particular trail system is based on art and heritage amenities. This encourages tourism and active transportation simultaneously. There are galleries and antique and treasure shops for residents and visitors to explore.

Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls case study

- The recently opened 'Northern Ontario Sportfishing Centre' in the Township is a significant new facility.
- It is meant as a tourist, education and cultural centre, providing a service to locals and visitors alike. The tourism centre contributes to local employment and attracts approximately 12,000 visitors in the summer.

Halton Region case study

- Halton Region has an Agricultural Tourism Strategy, which is being led by the Economic Development Department.
- Part of Halton Region's Economic Development vision includes collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture's Regional Tourism Organization and local destination marketing organizations in tourism marketing activities through social media, online advertising and the destination marketing of Halton's tourism resources: Halton Region Economic Development Strategy.
- One example of agri-tourism in Halton Region is the Halton Pumpkin Trail.



Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Consider developing a tourism strategy or bring the focus to tourism through community economic development. A tourism strategy can help to identify, build and develop infrastructure that will support the tourism sector while also providing infrastructure and resources that will improve quality of life of residents.
2. Tips from practitioners:
 - Come up with creative ways to acquire the necessary funds; these could include writing funding proposals and applying for grants.
 - Build a coalition with the business community and council.
 - Break a project down into manageable pieces.

Other resources

- [Creativity, Tourism and Economic Development in a Rural Context: the case of Prince Edward County \(2010\)](#)
- [Canada's Creative Corridor – Connecting Creative Urban and Rural Economies within Eastern Ontario and the Mega Region \(2009\) Martin Prosperity Institute Report](#)

Action Seven - Planning for Special Age Groups

Why is planning for special age groups important?

- Rural communities have larger proportions of aging populations when compared to larger urban centres.
- Transportation access is consistently identified as a major barrier in studies on the impacts of an aging demographic (OPPI, 2009).
- Two of the issues which currently face many rural communities are out-migration of youth and an aging population.

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- The issue of aging population is a major social planning topic and the planning for the challenges of an aging population is garnering greater attention recently. Rural communities faced with aging populations will need to examine mechanisms to increase transportation options, and geriatric support services (Social Planning Network of Ontario, 2010).
- Innovative ideas for transporting youth to recreational amenities in rural municipalities include late night school buses or shuttles and organized car pools.

Township of Prince case study – aging communities

- The Township of Prince has created a 2013–2018 Accessibility Plan. The plan includes extending bus services from Sault St. Marie into the township, and Prince Township has an arrangement with the city for a bus to come to the corner of two highways. Please see the [2013–2018 Accessibility Plan](#).
- A co-op program funded by the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Association is a key item that has provided the municipality with funding for their Strategic Plan and Accessibility Plan.

Town of Hanover case study – youth planning

- The Town of Hanover is in the process of developing a Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, a precedent taken from the community of Ingersoll. Please see: [Fusion Youth Centre website](#).
- This type of facility would provide services such as education, recreation, social services and exposure to technology.
- This type of youth facility would be geared to young people who are not planning on pursuing post-secondary education. The centre would aid these youth in finding alternative employment options that would allow them to remain and reside in Hanover.

Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Ensure that your planning initiatives bring a focus to the needs of an aging population. The requirements and needs in aging populations will be unique in terms of accessibility, services and transportation issues. The County of Brant & City of Brantford have developed a Master Aging Plan for the comprehensive needs of an aging community. Please see: [County of Brant & City of Brantford Master Aging Plan](#).
2. Ensure that your planning documents have consideration for youth, such as the inclusion of skateboard parks, arenas and sports fields, among other activities.
3. Develop a youth retention strategy. Provide opportunities for education and employment. Take a community economic development approach and seek out opportunities that could exist for youth in your community.
4. Tips from practitioners:
 - Use other communities as inspiration; the Town of Hanover is taking on a youth initiative based on the existing one in Ingersoll.
 - For communities in northern Ontario, try connecting with the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Association.
 - Share ideas and resources with neighbouring communities.
 - Keep an eye out for grants that would allow the possibility of co-op employment.
 - Engage your senior population as volunteers and in leadership positions. This will benefit the community and provide opportunities for individuals.



Other resources

- Ontario Government (2013). Finding the Right Fit Age-Friendly Community Planning.
- Ontario Professional Planners Institute - OPPI (2009) Healthy Communities and Planning for Age Friendly Communities. Toronto, ON: OPPI.
- PHAC's Age-Friendly Rural and Remote Communities: A Guide.
- Social Planning Network of Ontario (2010) Ontario's Social Landscape: Socio-Demographic Trends and Conditions in Communities across the Province.
- The 8-80 Problem: Designing Cities for Young and Old.



Action Eight - Agriculture

Why are agriculture and agricultural practices important?

- Agriculture is important to many rural economies. Permitting diversification on-farm, providing more flexibility and protecting agricultural uses and normal farm practices can encourage and protect sustainable farms and farmers (MMAH, 2014).
- Agriculture also provides a source of fresh food and employment opportunities and more directly connects consumers with the food that they eat.
- Agriculture is fundamentally connected to soil, air and water, and proper agricultural practices can contribute positively to each of these attributes.

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- Policies and definitions in the new 2014 Provincial Policy Statement safeguard and encourage agricultural feasibility of rural economies by:
 - » permitting more on-farm diversified uses, such as agri-tourism;
 - » providing more flexibility for agriculture-related uses and
 - » protecting and promoting agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses and normal farm practices in accordance with provincial standards (policy 1.1.5.8).

Halton Region case study

- Halton Region has developed a Rural Agricultural Strategy; other regions and counties have also developed agricultural strategies. The goals of the Strategy are to encourage viable farm succession, a healthy rural economy, successful agri-tourism and opportunities for supplemental income for farmers.
- The specific initiatives to make these goals possible include permitting small business operations, rural services to support farming and economic strategies specifically geared at farms and agriculture as well as agri-tourism strategies and the promotion of local food and unique crops.

Township of Scugog case study

- The Township of Scugog has a comprehensive zoning by-law that allows for home occupations and home industries.
- These industries are meant to serve the surrounding farm community and could include: small welding shops, woodworking businesses and bed and breakfasts as well as other home occupations.
- These home industries are considered small business incubators, which could move into larger employment areas in the future.



Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Protect agricultural land, as it has significant environmental, economic and social benefits. Agricultural industry will only survive where the land exists for farming. Many communities are benefiting from near urban agriculture and the local food sector.
2. Encourage stewardship and healthy environmental practices on agricultural lands, as there is a fundamental connection to water and air quality. Many farmers have benefited from the Environmental Farm Plan. Municipalities have also established programs that encourage agricultural funding. The Grand River Conservation Authority works with rural landowners on initiatives such as the Rural Water Quality Program. This program provides financial assistance and technical advice to landowners to help them improve and protect water on their land. Please see the following links: [Grand River Conservation Services](#) and [Environmental Farm Plan](#).
3. Support the local farm community through groups such as Agricultural Advisory Committees. Both Halton and Durham Regions have these committees established. Please see: [Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee](#).
4. Tips from practitioners:
 - Ensure plans and strategies are in place; this allows for initiatives to be implemented when funds become available.
 - Encourage a healthier economy, which will result in a healthier population.
 - Focus on promoting agricultural businesses and food production businesses.

Other resources

- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing - MMAH (2014) [An Introduction to the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014: Rural Ontario](#).
- Ontario Professional Planners Institute (2009) [Planning for Food Systems in Ontario](#).



Action Nine - Cultural Strategies and Revitalization

Why are cultural strategies and revitalization important?

- Cultural strategies and revitalization have the ability to contribute to improvements to the social fabric of communities and human health and well-being as well as the sustainability of a space.
- They can build and maintain public places that foster community and social development.
- The recognition of history and importance of place can be tied into historic preservation initiatives.

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- Cultural resources play a key role in enhancing quality of place and enhancing local creative economies. Municipal cultural planning is a tool for weighing these assets and increasing success in a local creative economy.
- Historic preservation and the creation of low-income housing can be used in conjunction to contribute to the revitalization of communities. Continued investment in heritage buildings through restoration and repair for affordable housing purposes and stabilization of historic districts through the construction of infill housing should be acknowledged as contributing to civic beautification and retention in small communities.

Municipality of Trent Hills case study

- Cultural initiatives, heritage and revitalization are all important and successful elements in the Municipality of Trent Hills.
- There are a variety of festivals that occur in the community of Trent Hills; these include the lilac festival, maple syrup festival and waterfront festival.
- These cultural and heritage elements have a strong link to economic development; the community is able to use culture to attract people to their community.

Bruce County case study

- The County of Bruce has established 'Spruce the Bruce', which is a downtown improvement program. The program is focused on revitalizing and redefining the identity of individual downtown centres; it also provides organizational support and grants. Spruce the Bruce helps to enhance the built form of communities through restoration and design and also helps individual towns by developing a new community vision. Please see: [Spruce the Bruce](#).



Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Recognize the importance of built heritage resources such as downtowns and villages. Many municipalities have been successful with this through community improvement plans, business improvement associations and local fundraising. This gives rural downtowns the opportunity to become vibrant and healthy economic development areas. Please see: [Downtown Grimsby Community Improvement Plan](#).
2. Promote local events and festivals. The arts contribute to community well-being, volunteering and economic opportunities and have been shown to improve the health of residents. This could include promoting local theatre, local arts and crafts festivals and downtown activities such as outdoor markets. See for example: [Blyth Festival Canadian Theatre](#), [Dragon's Den in Meaford Event](#) and [Study on the Benefits of Performing Arts](#).
3. Tips from practitioners:
 - Identify what makes your community unique and build on this.
 - Discover initiatives that citizens will get excited about and support.
 - Downtowns and cultural events have a connection to community economic development, tourism, employment and services. Cultural Master Plans can help communities in building their cultural assets. Please see: [Township of Wellington North Municipal Cultural Plan](#) and [Haliburton County Community Co-operative](#).

Other resources

- Canadian Institute of Planners - CIP (2012) [Healthy Communities Practice Guide](#).
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport (2014) [Ontario Heritage Tool Kit](#).

Action Ten - Access to Local Food

Why is access to local food important?

- The major food-related issues in rural areas are different from those in urban areas given the low population density, lengthier distances between retailers and rapid rise of super centres and their effect on other food retailers.
- Some barriers that exist to purchasing local food include perceptions that it is unavailable, consumer inability to identify it and acceptance of preserved foods in the off-season.
- Currently, communities across Canada are working together on developing grassroots solutions to food security and local food availability. Community supported agriculture and farmers' markets have been considered a viable option to provide a source of fresh, affordable and culturally appropriate food to those who would not otherwise have access.
- Local food can contribute to a healthy balanced diet, involves minimal processing and has a reduced environmental impact (by virtue of being local, it does not travel thousands of miles and has a higher nutritional value).

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- The promotion of local food security has inspired many Community Food Actions (CFAs). The recently developing CFAs are varied, and many are quite innovative (PHAC, 2012).
- There are some CFAs, such as food cooperatives, which are concerned with getting affordable foods into the hands of individuals. Other initiatives are focused on developing community capacity to produce and prepare their own food; these include actions such as community supported agriculture and kitchens. Some other CFAs involve policy which aims to reduce poverty and/or support local food economies.

Haliburton County case study

- Haliburton County has over 20 food security initiatives addressing the three stages of food security: short term relief, individual or community capacity building and system change. Each food security initiative operates within a specific agency's mandate but values the richness of networking and being a partner of the Haliburton County FoodNet, a community food security networking group. FoodNet partners meet on an ongoing basis to share successes and challenges. Partners collaborate around raising awareness, funding opportunities, sharing resources, transportation challenges, research and advocacy. Over the past few years this group has been working on increasing access of fresh and local food to residents in need. Please see: Haliburton County FoodNet.
- Another food group in this county is Harvest Haliburton. Their goal is to support the development of a local sustainable food system for Haliburton County. Presently they are conducting a community food assessment that will inform long-term planning and action for a sustainable food system. Please see: Harvest Haliburton.



Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Support the consumption and production of local food. Municipalities can do this by protecting farmland, supporting farmers' markets and by supporting activities such as on-farm sales. Official plan policies and zoning by-laws should also support farm retail markets. See for example: Jurisdictional Analysis and Best Practices for Land Use Planning Affecting Direct Marketing and Agri-Tourism Operations in Ontario and Farmers' Markets across Ontario.
2. Recognize that local food is an economic opportunity and also provides health benefits. Local food production should be supported as well as opportunities for farmers to connect with customers. This could be encouraged through the development of local food charters. See for example: Kawartha Lakes Food Charter.
3. Implement by-laws that protect spaces for community supported agriculture, community gardens and agricultural land for food growing and production and provide better opportunities for local food processing and sale.
4. Consider promoting new methods of acquiring local food such as 'gleaning' (i.e. foraging for food in the wild such as hunting, fishing and collecting edible wild items).

Other resources

- Gilliland, J. & Sadler, R. (2012) Mapping Food Accessibility in the Built Environment of Chatham-Kent. Human Environments Analysis Laboratory (HEAL): University of Waterloo. <http://www.theheal.ca/publications.php>.
- Let's Talk Food - A Food Policy Council for Chatham-Kent.
- Hastings & Prince Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit – HPECHU (2012) Building Complete and Sustainable Communities: Healthy Policies for Official Plans.
- Public Health Agency of Canada – PHAC (2012) Evaluating Outcomes of Community Food Actions: A Guide.
- Sustain Ontario is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming. Retrieved from: <http://sustainontario.com/>.
- Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities (2013).



Action Eleven - Nature

Why is nature important?

- To assure the prolonged existence of natural heritage and resources, residents must protect and preserve the natural environment. This can be accomplished through stewardship of the land, air and water. Sustainable spaces help communities build an environmental ethic by providing everyday opportunities for people to connect with nature.
- In addition, a community with nature present at a variety of levels contributes to the spirit of a place. The availability of green space is associated with increased levels of community social capital, and exposure to nature reduces individuals stress levels, anger and anxiety and replaces these with feelings of pleasure (CIP, 2012).

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- A report commissioned for the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation has identified that the goods and services embedded within the natural assets of the Greenbelt of the Toronto-centred region returns to the economy a value of \$2.6 billion of value on an annual basis. This is found within the land base of the Greenbelt that provides services for clean air, water and land (David Suzuki Foundation, 2006).
- The Town of Aurora assessed the economic value of their natural capital assets and found that the value of Aurora's natural assets is estimated at approximately \$7.4 million (rounded) annually. Please see: [The Economic Value of Natural Capital Assets](#).

Town of Orangeville case study

- Since 2007, the Town of Orangeville has had a 'Sustainability Action Team' comprised of community political leaders and town staff, interested citizens and business personnel. The committee is driven by actions that include: tree plantings, community garden establishment, information sharing via an on-line stewardship guidebook, community festivities (Earth Week, school events) and giving stewardship awards.

Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands (NEMI) case study

- The main policy document guiding some of the community initiatives in NEMI is the Sustainable Community Plan.
- The elements promoted within the plan include a healthy active lifestyle, environmental stewardship, economic development and agricultural land and products.

Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Acknowledge, use and manage natural heritage resources for their important environmental, economic and social benefits to the rural community. Examine opportunities for partnerships with environmental organizations (e.g. Carolinian Canada) that can leverage local natural assets to larger goals and aspirations. Local tourism and economic development benefits can be matched with issues of biodiversity protection/enhancement and climate change adaptation/mitigation. For example please see: [Rural Landowner Stewardship Guide](#) and [Best Practices Guide to Natural Heritage Systems Planning](#).
2. Promote stewardship and voluntary approaches to natural areas and preservation. See for example: [The Wellington County Green Legacy](#), which plants trees within the county. See also the [Environmental Farm Plan](#).
3. Become familiar with approaches to environmental innovation and planning. The resource [Approaches to Environmental Innovation: A Rural Municipal Perspective](#) provides ten key action items for successful environmental planning. Please also see: [Environmental Planning and Innovation: Best Practices for Rural Communities](#).

Other resources

- Canadian Institute of Planners - CIP (2012) [Healthy Communities Practice Guide](#).
- David Suzuki Foundation (2006) [Ontario's Wealth, Canada's Future: Appreciating the Value of the Greenbelt's Eco-services](#).
- [York Region's Greening Strategy](#).



Action Twelve - Safe and Affordable Housing

Why is safe and affordable housing important?

- Decent places to live that are affordable and appropriate are a basic human need. Communities need to consider healthy and safe equity issues between those that have more and those that have less. The provision of safe and affordable housing to house less fortunate individuals and families is an important consideration of local and provincial government in Ontario. This is especially important as Canadians spend on average 90% of their time indoors.
- The provision of safe and affordable housing and special needs housing (for those within institutional support settings) is something that rural community leaders need to be mindful of. The costs of housing services are shared amongst various government levels (municipal and higher levels), and it represents a significant cost to taxpayers.
- Safe and affordable housing provision is reflective of a health and wellness perspective for citizens, which is outlined in both Ontario Planning Act legislation as well as the Public Health standards of Ontario.
- Many differing forms of safe and affordable housing provision are available and constantly in need across the province – from subsidized rental accommodation to low cost ownership housing, special needs and institutional care facilities.

What did we learn from the research?

- There are many differing forms of safe and affordable housing, mechanisms in their delivery (government social services, non-profits, private sector) and differing types, from rental, co-ownership, co-operative, condominium and freehold tenure types.
- In terms of safety, Canadian homes generally have good air quality. However, indoor air pollutants like mould, dust mites and radon, as well as how a house is built and maintained, can all affect indoor air quality and need to be considered when developing new safe and affordable housing.
- New affordable housing in the form of lower cost ownership housing has a market niche in rural communities that are close to larger cities.
- Social housing (rent subsidized units) is operated through 47 service managers (under the Housing Services Act) across the province. Within rural areas, the service managers are responsible for social housing management matters across broad geographic areas.
- The provincial government has laid out a broad housing planning framework for Ontario through various means: in legislation (Housing Services Act), through a strategic plan – the 2010 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy and planning requirements via the Provincial Policy Statement (see resource listings below).
- Plans for affordable housing and homelessness are required to be enacted by service managers from time to time (beginning by January 1, 2014, with updates every five years thereafter). Municipalities are to give consideration for affordable housing in their official plans and their updates from time to time.



Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Municipalities need to recognize the importance of the topic. Work with people who are knowledgeable about the topic and lobby for new affordable housing.
2. Attempt to maintain existing built facilities that can be readily adapted to housing – the most affordable unit that can be constructed is usually found in a space that already stands (unless it is unstable or unfit for human occupancy). Secondary suites in houses are useful for this as well as the repurposing of older non-functioning commercial spaces and upper floors on main streets of rural towns and villages.
3. From a land-use perspective, municipalities can assist by providing modest forms of housing in rural contexts through conversion, retrofit and intensification mechanisms. These include demonstration projects that show local employment, spin-off community benefits and cost effectiveness to repair versus building new.
4. Refer to the housing study completed for your region; housing studies were completed by the 47 housing service managers that are situated around the province. For an example, please see the [Municipality of Chatham-Kent Housing Study Update](#).
5. Tips from practitioners:
 - Partner with existing organizations that are knowledgeable about the topic, such as social service agencies, non-profit housing organizations and charitable housing organizations.
 - Work with motivated agencies and individuals to construct modest projects. The development of affordable housing is a useful mechanism to build hope for those that have very little. It demonstrates a partnership mentality for the municipality in aiding in this important endeavour.
 - Benchmark how the community is doing with respect to the provision of affordable housing resources, e.g. Chatham Kent Housing Report Card.
 - Host community forums to encourage networking opportunities for developers/landlords and community leaders/interested citizens to meet and interact.
 - Use various government legislation tools (Building Code, Public Health Standards) to ensure living conditions are safe in conjunction with the physical provision of housing.

Other resources

- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – [Municipal Tools for Affordable Housing](#).
- [Affordable Housing Strategy for Ontario](#).
- Provisions for planning for affordable housing through the [Provincial Policy Statement](#) – see Section 4.1
- Health Canada (2012) [Our Health, Our Environment: A Snapshot of Environmental Health in Canada](#).



Action Thirteen - Climate Change

Why is climate change important?

- It is now well recognized that climate change affects rural economies, the built environment and the natural environment. These impacts are hard to predict, but all facets of life will be affected. It is anticipated that both long-term and short-term alterations to land, air and water conditions will occur.
- The severity of storm events, including extreme heat events, is one of the most immediate impacts to rural areas that require consideration. Depending on location, these events can result in wind and water damage impacts. Various increased hazards to property damage and human injury and loss of life can occur associated with tornadoes, ice storms, flooding and wild fires.
- Climate change is a big picture issue; however, local rural community leaders can assist in acting locally to mitigate and adapt to climate change conditions.

What did we learn from the research?

From the literature:

- There are various Ontario initiatives that provide guidance on climate change. These initiatives look at longer-term climate change mitigation measures (for example, actions that reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions or permit ecosystem carbon sequestration) as well as shorter-term adaptation efforts (for example, plan for increased contingency hazard conditions) and planning for extreme heat events.
- Some locales of the province are taking this topic more seriously than others. Efforts can come from the bottom up (such as transition towns) and from the top down (for example, municipal energy conservation plans, conservation authority watershed plans, climate change adaptation plans and community vulnerability assessments).
- Efforts to build resiliency into local community conditions can be guided through various publications available to the Ontario condition (see resources).

Town of Orangeville case study

- The Town of Orangeville has an environmentally focused by-law which provides development incentives to deliver environmental features in higher density infill buildings in the community.
- Incentives are in the form of development fee waivers to provide green features in a development site; examples include bio-swales, geothermal energy systems, grey-water reuse, green roofs, infiltration gardens, naturalized landscaping and LEED construction standards. All of these actions could contribute positively to the issue of climate change.

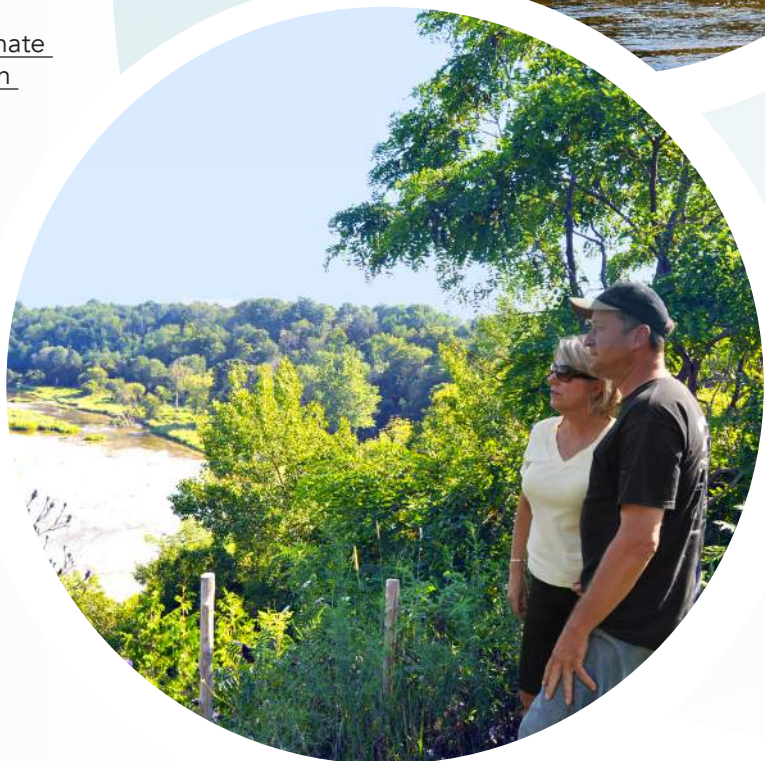


Recommendations for rural municipalities

1. Acknowledge the concern for climate change through commentary and local action. Ensure that your official plan has policies related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The 2014 Provincial Policy Statement has also encouraged communities to do so. Please see: [Peak Oil and Climate Change: A Rural Community Guide](#).
2. Consider the development of a special purpose plan that considers climate change, sustainability and energy plans. This type of initiative provides potential for a more focused approach to have communities respond to climate change. See for example: [Community Climate Change Action Plan](#) and [Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands Sustainable Community Plan](#).
3. Consider undertaking community initiatives that involve greenhouse gas emissions reduction, sustainable neighbourhood plans and brownfield remediation and redevelopment. Funding is available through the Green Municipal Fund offered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. More information is available at [the Green Municipal Fund website](#).
4. Embrace the voluntary actions of community members to address climate change. There are many groups that have environmental goals and objectives that can contribute positively to the issue of climate change. For example, many communities are becoming part of the transition town movement, please see: [Transition Town Peterborough](#).
5. Tips from practitioners:
 - Examine resiliency to climate change impacts at the local level. Take advantage of senior government programs that are made available from time to time to examine vulnerability conditions.
 - Look at implementing actions that may have immediate economic payback considerations but that also have longer-term climate change co-benefits. The resource guides outlined below provide examples of measures such as energy conservation and tree planting.
 - Undertake risk assessments to understand where and how your municipality is vulnerable to impacts of climate change. Please see the [Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Assessment for London Middlesex Area](#).
 - Work with local champions who may want to take on projects that have short-term immediate impacts such as local community development and economic activity spin-offs but that may also provide future benefits.

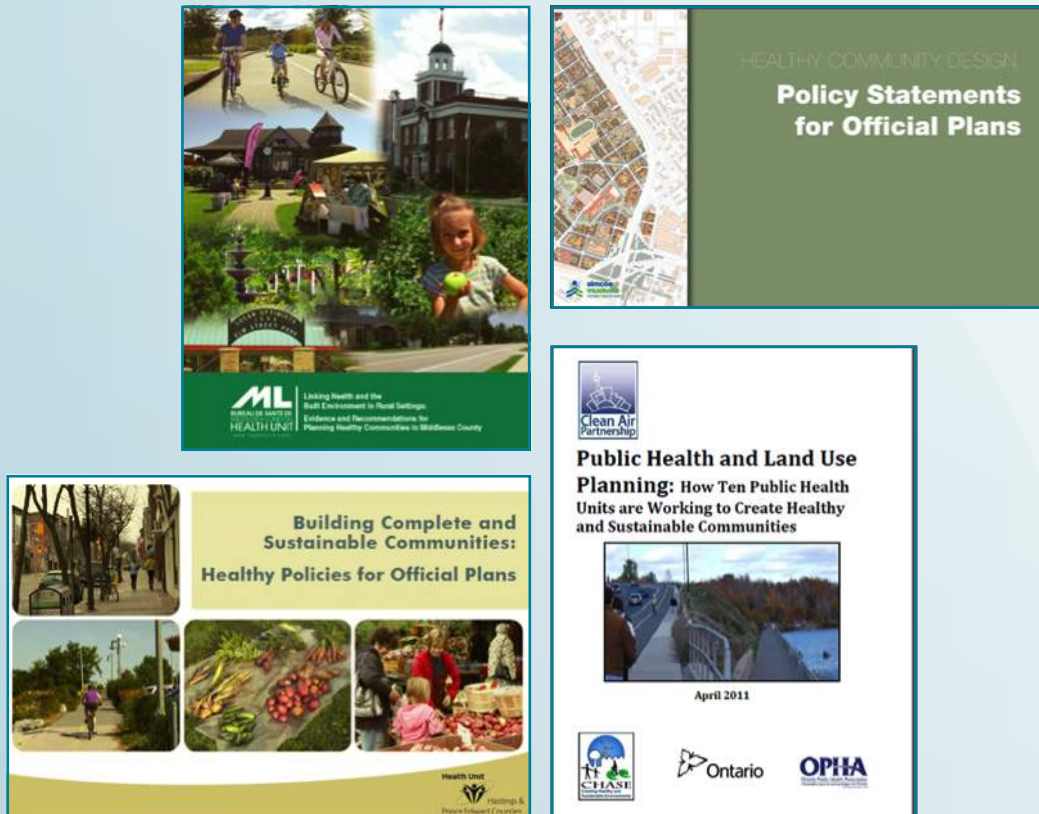
Other resources

- [Climate Change Strategy for Ontario – Climate Ready: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014](#).
- [Development Planning for Resiliency In the 21st Century](#).
- [Adaptive Capacity for Climate Change in Canadian Rural Communities](#).



Section Five: Wrap Up and Conclusion

There are a variety of existing guides available to rural community leaders in planning for health and wellness in their communities. These guides are appropriately related to rural contexts and include the following (clockwise from top right location): Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit - Healthy Community Design Policy Statements for Official Plans; Clean Air Partnership - Public Health and Land Use Planning: How Ten Public Health Units are Working to Create Healthy and Sustainable Communities; Hastings and Prince Edward Counties - Building Complete and Sustainable Communities: Healthy Policies for Official Plans; Middlesex-London Health Unit - Linking Health and the Built Environment in Rural Settings.



One other tool to consider: Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA)

The Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA) tool is of particular importance to rural communities as it can serve as an aid for decision makers as to how liveable their communities are with respect to healthy amenities and active living criteria. As stated in a report by the North Bay medical officer of health:

This assessment is designed to help rural communities (population of 10,000 or less) collect data on physical environment features and amenities, community characteristics, community programs, and policies that could potentially influence levels of physical activity among residents in their community. The findings will allow communities to better understand the 'friendliness' of their community for walking, biking, and playing for everyone including youth, elderly, and disabled. A summary report will be written for each community and will provide a structure for assessing the built environment, programs, and policies.

The RALA tool, and specifically the Rural Active Living Assessment for North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit completed for the Mattawa Region in northern Ontario, was able to identify the community's current infrastructure, transportation and recreational facilities that enable active living. The results summarized in the report are able to provide a baseline for communities to develop implementation plans to address active transportation, active living, parks and recreation planning and program delivery.

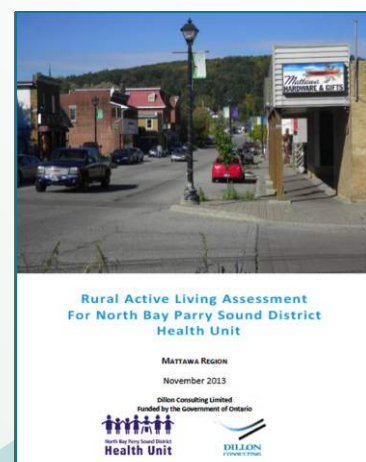
In rural communities, there is a particular need to prepare plans in advance and be proactive in planning in order to effectively promote health and wellness. The process of preparing plans and having plans available has multiple benefits:

1. It assists with building local community capacity in the planning and development of the community by local constituents (residents, businesses).
2. It illustrates to locales (and others) that the community is organized and ready for change. Through this process, plans can be used to leverage senior government funding programs for economic activity, new community infrastructure and health/wellness attributes for local residents. Various government funding programs, such as FedNor, and various ministries at the Ontario government can be used to enhance local living and working conditions.

When plans are in place, this allows for infrastructure and healthy amenities to be implemented, as these plans serve as a tool which helps to secure funding for healthy rural built environment creation. It is also important for municipal staff to benchmark or acknowledge the 'progress' of healthy community initiatives.

A final word...

As humans, we are in the built environment at almost all times; therefore, it is important that this environment be healthy. If one lives in a rural dispersed area or small town, the same opportunities for amenities and well-being need to exist as in larger cities. This project had the goal of recognizing the importance of healthy built environments in rural communities; through case study examples it also had the goal of identifying tools for rural and small town communities that would lead to the development of healthy built environments. The overall project findings indicate that some key tools include having community involvement and collaboration, political support, and realistic as well as manageable goals when moving forward. Overall, successful and innovative built environments in rural and small town communities come about when people connect with one another.



Key Themes for Healthy Rural Built Environments

Section Six: Reference and Selected Resources¹

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¹ For purposes of report brevity, web links attached to action item examples in Section 4.3 are not listed here. They are, however, ‘hot-linked’ in Section 4.3 of the report’s electronic version for the reader’s benefit.

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Appendix: Innovative Initiative Examples

The following case studies provide examples of innovative initiatives occurring in rural municipalities across Ontario. These case studies were revealed through the research that was completed for this project. Municipal and public health professionals were interviewed and shared the following initiatives that are occurring in their communities. The examples in this appendix provide lessons and tools for other rural municipalities hoping to improve the health of their communities.



1

Title

City of Kawartha Lakes

Theme: Community Design and Land Use Planning

Population: 73,214

Contact

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Photo Source: <https://www.facebook.com/WalkFriendlyON>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Have the goal to be vibrant
- Encourage community support, education and involvement
- Not 'plan in a box'

Initiative

Rural communities achieving walkability through community design and land use planning.

Context

The City of Kawartha Lakes has recently developed a variety of policy documents that focus on creating active and healthy rural communities:

- the City of Kawartha Lakes Official Plan (2012);
- five Community-based Secondary Plans (one for each population centre);
- the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP);
- a Growth Management Strategy and a Food Charter.

Official Plan Amendment Policy:

18.13.1. "It is the policy of this plan to consider urban and community design as an integral component of new development and redevelopment in the settlement areas. The preparation of a set of community design guidelines for settlement areas to ensure that new development is attractive and consistent with the policies of this Plan is encouraged".

Innovative Features

Activating Kawartha Lakes

- This initiative consisted of walking audits with Dan Burden, who is considered an expert in pedestrian and bicycle design; he is a consultant that focuses on walkability.
- Community members and stakeholders were invited to take part in scheduled walks with Dan Burden that took place in downtown Lindsay and Fenelon Falls.
- The goal was to create awareness about issues for both pedestrians and cyclists relating to the built environment and walkability, as well as to explore potential solutions.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Develop Community-based Secondary Plans for individual towns and hamlets.
- Encourage collaboration between the municipality and health unit.
- Gain the support of Council.
- Have the goal to be vibrant and encourage community involvement in the process of policy development.
- Educate community members and work together.
- Don't 'plan in a box' and be open to new and innovative ideas.

2

Title

County of Haliburton

Theme: Active Transportation

Population: 17,026

Contact

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Photo Source:
<http://www.toolsochange.com>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Have a committee or community-based group
- Communicate the multiple benefits of AT
- Start with one manageable goal

Initiative

Rural communities achieving active transportation (AT) through partnership between community-based groups, municipalities and other stakeholders.

Context

- A large amount of active transportation advocacy, planning and promotion in Haliburton has occurred through the health unit and in partnership with the Communities in Action (CIA) Committee.
- Active transportation initiatives are focused in the Villages of Haliburton and Minden. The active transportation projects and ideas were focused on the villages, in order to make implementation more manageable and achievable.

Official Plan Policy:

Land use patterns and development should promote energy efficiency, improved air quality, and allow for compact development that is designed in such a way to support and encourage active transportation....(County of Haliburton Official Plan, 2010, 2.3.5.3)

Innovative Features

Share the Road Program

- This project has been a partnership between the County, CIA and health unit, and includes the installation of signs and bike racks, as well as campaign posters, newspaper ads and distribution of educational brochures, to educate the public.
- The county has been adding 1.0 – 1.2m paved shoulders on county roads when they have been up for reconstruction. About 32 km of paved shoulder have been added, some of which are within a 5 km radius of villages.

Measurement and Evaluation

- A comprehensive evaluation was done in 2011-12, to measure the impact of the CIA's activities since 2004. Evaluation tools included a community survey, inventory of changes, key informant interviews and observation counts. Results showed increases in reported and observed AT activity, and that the CIA has contributed to these changes. The full report and executive summary are available on the CIA website.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Recognize that a community-based group can take leadership on active transportation planning.
- Start with a manageable goal, such as focusing on one village.
- Communicate the multiple benefits of active transportation.

3

Title

County of Huron

Theme: Community Engagement and Volunteerism

Population: 59,100

Contact

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Photo Source: County of Huron

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Uphold the public interest
- Have council buy-in
- Have champions for projects

Initiative

Rural communities taking part in active community engagement and volunteerism.

Context

- Community engagement is a key initiative that has been successful for the County of Huron.
- Huron County focuses on “achieving a balance between the work of subject matter experts who have unique insights into issues, and community engagement with as broad a network of stakeholders as possible” -Monica Walker-Bolton

Official Plan Policy:

Huron’s residents value their involvement in the planning and delivery of services. Residents see more of the responsibility for services in the hands of the community in the future. Residents are encouraged to get involved in order to maintain the level of service in their communities.

Innovative Features

Jane’s Walk

- Was a community organized event where residents and individuals knowledgeable on urban design and planning walked around downtown Goderich and discussed design elements that could improve the community.
- Jane’s Walk was innovative for a rural community because it originated as an urban idea, and was implemented in a rural downtown.
- The walk was inspired by Jane Jacobs who was an urbanist and helped to preserve cities such as Toronto and New York. Jane was an activist for people places and wrote about how cities can function as spaces for people and was passionate about the existence of effective public spaces.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Develop safe spaces for people to engage in (such as Jane’s Walk).
- Have council buy-in, this allows for new projects to be made possible through public funding, as well encourages fundraising and private donations.
- Have champions for projects, having an individual that is dedicated and willing to see a project through contributes significantly to the outcome.

4

Title

Township of Sioux Narrows - Nestor Falls

Theme: Water Quality & Tourism

Population: 720

Contact

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Photo Source: Kenora Daily Miner and News

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Break a project down into manageable pieces
- Gain support from the community
- Point out the economic benefits of a project

Initiative

Rural communities finding creative solutions to water quality issues and tourism.

Context

- There is a high consciousness on water quality in the Township, a contributing factor to this is that 94% of the properties are residential waterfront. Sioux Narrows – Nestor Falls has a large proportion of cottage country and an economy largely focused on tourism. These are all drivers for initiatives focused on maintaining healthy water quality.
- Some of the successes in planning at Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls revolve around tourism which is a prominent industry in the township.

Official Plan Policy:

4.20 Shoreline Development

4.20.1. It is recognized that inland lakes and other water bodies with the municipality are valuable recreational and environmental resources and as such should be protected from development that might cause deterioration of their water quality or fish or wild life habitat. It is the intent of Council that this plan controls the nature and extent of development along the shoreline of water bodies including second tier or back lot development, development on islands and development along watercourses flowing into lakes.

Innovative Features

Water Quality Policies and By-laws

- There are policies in the Official Plan relating to shoreline protection.
- There is a new zoning by-law which requires that any development must be a minimum of 20 meters away from water. Some of the organizations that aid in ensuring the implementation of these policies include the township and the lake of woods association.

Tourism Centre

- A significant project which was very successful is the Northern Ontario Sport Fishing Centre, which was developed and is located in the township.
- It is meant as a tourist, education and cultural centre.
- The facility brings approximately 12,000 visitors in the summer.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Come up with creative ways to acquire the necessary funds; this could include writing funding proposals and applying for grants.
- Build a coalition with the business community and council.
- Break a project down into manageable pieces.
- Often, any new initiative is seen as a cost; the key is to point out how these projects are investments and will become assets to the community in the long term.

5

Title

Town of Hanover

Theme: Youth Planning

Population: 7, 490

Contact

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Photo Source: <http://www.thepost.on.ca/>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Be committed to initiatives
- Encourage community support and involvement
- Political and Municipal Staff Backing

Initiative

Rural communities finding ways to engage youth.

Context

- Youth Friendly Status was awarded to the Town of Hanover; engaging youth has become a strength for the town.
- This has been most successful due to developing action plans together as a community. Mike also explained that the Town of Hanover looks at precedents of what other communities are doing.

Official Plan Policy:

2. Population Characteristics

The population of the Town will be characterized by a reversal of the recent decline in the pre-school and school age population, a relatively stable labour force and an increasing proportion of senior citizens.

C.3.2.3.(Min Mod. 7) To co-ordinate with the County and adjacent municipalities and appropriate agencies, the development and use of social and recreational facilities.

Innovative Features

Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre

- This centre is in the process of being developed in Hanover and was a precedent taken from the community of Ingersoll.
- Some of the services that would be provided by this type of facility would include education, recreation, social services and exposure to technology.
- This type of youth facility would be geared to young people who are not planning on pursuing post-secondary education. The centre would aid these youth in finding alternative employment options that would allow them to remain and reside in Hanover.
- Another element that contributes to the success of the Youth Friendly Status is the Youth Roots Group, which is a community organization that is supported by the municipality and engages youth and adults in the community.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Use other communities as inspiration.
- Have community groups and committees, ex. Youth Roots Group.
- Break a project down into manageable pieces.
- Have political and municipal staff backing.

6

Title

Township of Prince

Theme: Aging Communities

Population: 1,031

Contact

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Photo Source: en.wikipedia.org

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Sharing ideas and resources with neighbouring communities
- Keep an eye out for grants that would allow the possibility of co-op employment

Initiative

Rural communities finding ways to create healthy aging communities.

Context

- The township has been making a great effort to assess the needs of the public; Prince Township is a bedroom community to Sault Ste. Marie and has an aging community.
- There are large amount of priorities based on accessibility and improving transportation.

Official Plan Policy:

1) Planning public streets, spaces and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, and facilitate pedestrian and non-motorized movement, including walking and cycling.

4.2 Residential Growth and Housing. An aging population may result in some demand for higher density dwelling types, including seniors housing, and assisted living arrangements.

Innovative Features

2013-2018 Accessibility Plan

- Some of the results of the plan were extending bus services from Sault St. Marie into the township; Prince Township has an arrangement with the city for a bus to come to the corner of two highways
- There is also a vulnerable persons list which identifies members in the community that are in need of any assistance and the municipality makes an effort to aid these individuals when required. Transportation through red cross is also available.
- In terms of communication, the municipality makes an effort to keep connected with residents through a monthly newsletter and a newly installed sign outside of the municipal office, which posts messages about important community events.
- A key item that has provided the municipality with funding for their Strategic Plan and Accessibility Plan has been a co-op program funded by the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Association.

Key Lessons and Tools

- For communities in northern Ontario, connecting with the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Association.
- Sharing ideas and resources with neighbouring communities.
- Keeping an eye out for grants that would allow the possibility of co-op employment, for the township of Prince the grant which allowed them hire a co-op student was extremely valuable.

7

Title

Township of Scugog

Theme: Value Added Agricultural Practices

Population: 21,569

Contact

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Photo Source: <http://www.purplehill-preservation.com>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Promote agricultural businesses
- Have committees that support various municipal initiatives

Initiative

Rural communities finding creative solutions for value added agricultural practices.

Context

- A key initiative that aids the township is a comprehensive zoning by-law that allows for home occupations and home industries. This type of zoning by-law is meant to encourage small businesses on rural properties.

Official Plan Policy:

2.7 Economic Development

c) Encouraging the development of home-based businesses provided the proposed use is compatible with adjacent land uses;
d) Providing opportunities to improve and enhance the quality of agriculture value-added industry in the Township, including local agricultural food production, processing and distribution;

Innovative Features

Home Industries Zoning By-Law

- These industries are meant to serve the surrounding farm community and could include: small welding shops, wood-working businesses, bed and breakfasts, as well as other home occupations.
- These home industries are considered small business incubators, which could move into larger employment areas in the future.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Focus on promoting agricultural businesses and food production businesses. Some of the success that the township has been experiencing is a result of hard work which has focused on promoting and growing agricultural related businesses.
- Have committees that support various municipal initiatives.

8

Title

Municipality of Trent Hills

Theme: Cultural Strategies and Revitalization

Population: 12,604

Contact

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Photo Source: www.northumberland-today.com

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Find what makes your community unique and build on that
- Find initiatives that citizens will get excited about

Initiative

Rural communities finding creative ways of incorporating cultural elements into their community.

Context

- Cultural initiatives, heritage and revitalization are all important and successful elements in Trent Hills.
- Walkability is important within Trent Hills. An advantage of being a smaller rural community is that the scale of the downtown makes it possible to walk to a variety of locations.

Official Plan Policy:

4.1.2 To recognize, conserve and promote cultural heritage resources and perpetuate their value and benefit to the community.
4.2.2 A diverse range of activities, such as recreational and cultural activities, will be supported and promoted, based on the needs of the community, and will be accessible to all the residents of the Planning Area.

Innovative Features

Festivals in Trent Hills

- There are a variety of festivals that occur in the community, these include the lilac festival, maple syrup festival and waterfront festival.
- These cultural and heritage elements have a strong link to economic development; the community is able to use culture to attract people to their community.
- Another interesting example that combines culture and heritage is the festival theatre, which is an old converted barn that is used for musical performances. In this example a historic building is being used for cultural and community events.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Find what makes your community unique and build on this.
- It is also helpful to have a supportive council that is willing to provide the resources needed.
- Keep an eye out for potential funding in the form of grants and fundraisers, this has helped Trent Hills make various projects into a reality.
- Find initiatives that citizens will get excited about and support.

9

Title

County of Haliburton

Theme: Access to Local Food

Population: 17,026

Contact

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Photo Source: <http://uponhaliburton-hill.blogspot>.

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Know your community needs
- Encourage relationship building
- Find a common goal within the community

Initiative

Rural communities focusing on access to local food.

Context

- In Haliburton County there is a community food security networking group called Haliburton County FoodNet, which is a coalition of people involved in food program and/or addressing food insecurity.
- There are approximately 16 – 20 organizations involved in FoodNet, which include an array of various food programs from food banks, food skills, community meals, student nutrition, meals on wheels and more recently local food programs.
- FoodNet works together as a not for profit community partnership to help move toward community food security. FoodNet also focuses on raising awareness, relationship building and connecting various people and organizations together in order to make change happen.

Innovative Features

- Collectively FoodNet has developed an understanding of the food insecurity issues throughout the county and all members work together to ensure everyone has access to safe and healthy food. For example it has been identified that 76% of seniors and adults with disabilities surveyed from Community Care Haliburton are consuming 2 or less servings of fruits and vegetables per day. FoodNet will establish a system to support seniors and adults with disability to increase their access of fresh and local food. Community gardens provide community kitchens with fresh produce which is processed and then shared with other food programs. Members share storage space, transportation, and advocate for each other.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Partnerships such as the network described above, make it easier to receive grants and have the opportunity to collaborate in order to provide more services.
- It is effective to find various ways in which to encourage relationship building within the community.
- Discover a common goal of community members and then have one project to work on together and build partnerships.

10 Title

Town of Orangeville

Theme: Nature and Clean Air

Population: 27,975

Contact

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ning & Innovation

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Photo Source: en.wikipedia.org

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Have a driven committee
- Have council buy-in
- Provide environmental incentives through land use planning tools

Initiative

Rural communities taking part in environmental initiatives focused on nature and clean air.

Context

- Orangeville is a community within the Provincial Greenbelt Plan. It is also subject to the Places to Grow Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- The community is projected to grow slowly (1%/year) over the next 20 years, and with a significant portion of future growth directed to the built-up area of the Town (50%), there is a concerted effort underway to enhance the local environmental sustainability.

Official Plan Policy:

F2. Environmental Sustainability

Council will strive to conserve, protect and enhance the natural environment by promoting best practices in sustainable development, including the use of green development standards, energy efficient systems and living within the carrying capacity of the town's supporting ecosystems.

Innovative Features

Sustainability Action Team

- The 'Sustainability Action Team' (since 2007) is comprised of community political leaders and town staff, interested citizens and business personnel. The Committee is driven by actions which include: tree plantings, community garden establishment, information sharing via an on-line stewardship guidebook, community festivities (Earth Week, school events), and giving stewardship awards.

Environmentally Focused By-Law

- A by-law that provides development incentives to provide environmental features in higher density infill buildings in the community.
- Incentives are in the form of development fee waivers to provide 'green features' in a development site, e.g bioswales, geothermal energy systems, greywater reuse, green roofs, naturalized landscaping, LEED development standard construction.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Have a committee passionate about environmental issues.
- Have council buy-in, this allows for initiatives to be made possible through public funding, as well encourages fundraising and private donations.
- Provide environmental incentives through by-laws.

11

Title

County of Bruce

Theme: Cultural Strategies and Revitalization

Population: 66,102

Contact

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Photo Source: <http://www.saugeen-times.com>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Have support from the community
- Showcase the multiple needs that are being addressed with a project
- Start small and practical

Initiative

Rural communities taking initiative in regards downtown revitalization and civic beautification.

Context

- The main innovative initiative is 'Spruce the Bruce', which is based on the four pillars of downtown development, main-street programme from the University of Maryland.
- Being a smaller government Bruce County decided to take this approach rather than hiring a consultant to produce a design document.

Official Plan Policy:

5.2.2.4 Local Official Plans.

2. The local Official Plans for Primary Urban Communities shall contain, as a minimum, general development and land use policies dealing with the following issues:

- i) The Natural and Built Environment;
- ii) *Community Improvement*;
- iii) Municipal Services;
- iv) Heritage Resources;
- v) Transportation;
- vi) Economic Development; and
- vii) Their share of the total future overall County growth projection.

Innovative Features

Spruce the Bruce

- This initiative entailed creating a design toolkit that is four pages long.
- This toolkit guides towns and hamlets by asking the community what their unique selling feature is, what makes them different, how they want to market themselves.
- Some of the other elements that the programme focuses on are economic development, community marketing, and brand reinforcement.

Key Lessons and Tools

- You need support from all of your community partners.
- Start small and practical and then grow the initiatives upon further support.
- Projects that address multiple needs are often more politically supportable.
- Focus on implementation and follow-through.
- Measure results and get the results out to the public.

12

Title

County of Grey

Theme: Active Transportation/
Active Communities

Population: 92,568

Contact

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Photo Source: <http://www.thestar.com>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Work with your health unit
- Engage your community beyond the legislated requirements

Initiative

Rural communities taking initiative in regards to transportation deficits in their communities.

Context

- Transportation has been recognized as a key issue within the community.
- The lack of transportation and active transportation options keeps people from having a range of options when travelling to various destinations.
- Some residents experience barriers such as getting to medical appointments or grocery stores which in turn has health impacts.

Official Plan Policy:

1.6 Objectives

1.6.1 Physical

To locate and develop any new transportation and utility corridors and facilities, and/or expand the use of existing corridors in a manner which minimizes any negative effects.

Innovative Features

Transportation Management Plan (TMP)

- The community recognized that there is a need to do a TMP in terms of looking at a variety of factors, such as active transportation and looking at transit opportunities to connect dispersed and downtown communities and service facilities in downtown areas.
- Some recommendations from the transportation management plan are based on the fact that there are a number of existing transit providers and that each are providing niche type services, such as providing services for those with disabilities. A recommendation is to look for opportunities to expand or enhance those service options.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Work with your health unit, as they have a lot of information and resources.
- Community engagement beyond the requirements of the Planning Act is important.

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Title

Halton Region

Theme: Value Added
Agricultural Practices

Population: 501,669

Contact

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Photo Source: <http://www.greenbelt.ca>

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Have commitment from council
- Have existing plans and strategies in place
- Focus on a healthier economy, which will result in a healthy population

Initiative

Rural communities achieving a local economy through value added agricultural practices.

Context

- For the rural areas of Halton the land use perspective is to protect for agriculture. Halton Region has been active in protecting agricultural land even in advance of the Provincial Policy Statements and Greenbelt initiatives.
- The policy commitment of Halton is to engage and educate the community about the importance of long term sustainability of farms.

Official Plan Policy:

99(8) To promote a diverse, innovative and economically strong agricultural industry in Halton by tailoring its products and marketing to meet local and regional needs and demands.

99(7) To promote agriculture-related tourism and direct sales of farm produce and accessory products to visitors and local businesses.

100(14) home occupations and cottage industries with a gross floor area not exceeding 100 sq m or 25 per cent of the residential living area, whichever is lesser.

100(15) bed and breakfast establishments with three or fewer guest bedrooms.

Innovative Features

Rural Agricultural Strategy

- The goals of the Rural Agricultural Strategy are to encourage viable farm succession, a healthy rural economy, successful agri-tourism, and opportunities for supplemental income for farmers.
- The specific initiatives to make these goals possible include the allowance of small business operations, rural services to support farming, economic strategies specifically geared at farms and agriculture, as well as agri-tourism strategies and promoting local food and unique crops.
- This document receives input from the Agricultural Advisory Committee, which is mainly composed of residents in the community. The region has also hired an Agricultural Liaison Officer full-time, whose main tasks are to manage agricultural related policies in the community.

Key Lessons and Tools

- The resources that allow the initiatives in Halton Region to become a reality are commitment from council – who is extremely committed to maintaining a rural landscape. The rural landscape is able to exist through capital funds.
- Have existing plans and strategies in place, this allows for initiatives to be implemented when funds become available.
- Focus increasingly on a healthier economy, which will result in a healthier population.

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Title

Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands (NEMI)

Theme: Community Design and Land Use Planning

Population: 2,706

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Photo Source: en.wikipedia.org

Key Lessons, it is important to:

- Have commitment and support from council
- Listen to the community
- Develop a long term vision

Initiative

Rural communities focusing on community design and land use planning through policy documents.

Context

- A key policy document guiding some of the community design elements in NEMI is the Community Sustainability Plan. The preparation of an Official Plan for the community is currently in progress.

Sustainable Community Plan Vision:

2.2 Our Vision

Naturally beautiful, NEMI will strive to enhance, diversify and expand its economic base and entrepreneurial spirit; strengthen the health and wellbeing of all ages; honour its past and welcome its future, while maintaining its 'unique' quality of life on the island.

Innovative Features

Community Sustainability Plan

- Some of the elements promoted within the plan include; a healthy active lifestyle, economic development, and agricultural land and products.
- These overall policies have inspired more detailed actions within the community; such as farmer's markets, information workshops for farmers, a cooperative community garden, widened roads to accommodate bike paths, increased trail systems, and the development of a cycling plan.

Key Lessons and Tools

- Have commitment and support from council.
- Legitimately listen to and learn from the community.
- Create a long term vision that will carry the community through the next ten years or so; a vision for sustainability.



