

# Land Use Planning

## Review of Bruce County Land Use Planning Division:

Structure, Service Delivery Model, Roles and  
Responsibilities

### FINAL REPORT

June 30, 2020




## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

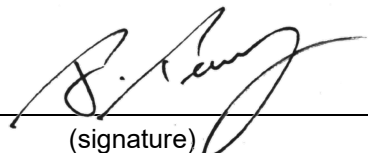
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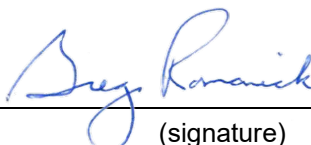
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# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## BACKGROUND

### 1.0 BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Earlier this year, Bruce County received one-time funding from the Provincial government to assess and modernize the delivery of their various services. Through this investment, the Province intends to assist small and rural municipalities to plan, modernize and improve the way in which services are provided to their communities.

A portion of the investment has been allocated to help support the delivery of modern and efficient services by the Bruce County Land Use Planning Division, including a review of the organizational structure of the division and how it serves the County and eight (8) local municipalities of Bruce County. As such, Stantec has been retained to complete a review of Bruce County's department design, structure, organization and the delivery of services offered by the County Land Use Planning Division.

In the current service delivery model, the Division provides both Local and County-level planning services. The Division processes applications and reports to County Council on County development planning matters (i.e. land division, plans of subdivision/condominium, and county official plan amendments). The Division also undertakes longer-range policy planning at the County level being responsible for advising County Council on the implementation of the County Official Plan and other special long-range planning policy studies and initiatives. By way of memorandums of agreement with local municipalities, the division also processes applications and provides planning advice by way of reporting to local municipal councils on development planning applications to amend local planning documents (i.e. minor variances, zoning by-law amendments, official plan amendments). From time to time, the Division has also undertaken or supported special projects (e.g. comprehensive zoning by-law reviews, community improvement plans, issue-specific studies/report, and comprehensive official plan updates, etc.) on behalf of the local municipal level of government.

Over recent years, of the planning services provided, processing local municipal and County development planning applications has taken priority to the Division fulfilling its long-range policy planning responsibilities at the County level, particularly in updating the County Official Plan. The Planning Division staff spends most of its time processing local municipal development planning applications. With increasing application volumes and timeline limitations set out in Provincial Regulation, the Division's time and effort has been directed more and more heavily to development review.

The resulting outcomes mean less resources in terms of staff time allocated to comprehensive, long range policy review projects like development of a new County Official Plan, five-year reviews and updates, monitoring of Community Improvement Plan programs, finding ways to realize attainable/affordable housing targets, and working on strategic, County corporate projects that serve to proactively address today's emerging challenges such as climate change, transportation, culture and the provision of a range and mix of housing.

As these larger, 'big picture' challenges evolve and begin to impact market conditions and land use development requirements and patterns (e.g. parking requirements, lot sizes/setbacks, target densities, etc.), outdated policies and by-laws may be creating an unnecessary burden of additional work for the Lands Use Planning Division, as applications to amend standards on a site-specific basis increase. Around this, Planning staff have little flexibility to adapt and change the way they manage their workloads due to legislated timeframes for application processing for the local municipalities.



# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## BACKGROUND

Additional concerns have emerged more recently as communities are experiencing significant challenges related to the recent health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ensuring the communities of Bruce County are looking forward and planning for their desired future growth and development, as well as getting the economy back on track, will be paramount considerations. This reality has also been a consideration in this review.

This report seeks to review and make recommendations for enhancements relative to the Division's role, structure and service delivery model to realize an improved, comprehensive delivery of planning services. The purpose of this report is to find ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Bruce County Land Use Planning Division in a manner which allows the County to best address future growth and development in a way that reflects the land use goals and objectives of the County and local municipalities.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

The work undertaken to complete this review took place over an approximately five-weeks of work time (between May 4<sup>th</sup> to June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020). As requested in the original request for proposals, the methodology included a significant effort to obtain stakeholder/key informant insights to serve as inputs to the review. These included:

1. Interviews with stakeholders/key informants, which included interview calls with senior staff (often the CAO, Clerk, CBO) at each of the eight (8) local municipalities (Stantec spoke to one to three local staff within each municipality). Also, Stantec held interviews with the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority and the Niagara Escarpment Commission;
2. An interview with planning staff from each of the three hub offices (three (3) staff members);
3. Documentation of the current situation by a review and evaluation of information provided and requested by the consultant team was undertaken. This included the following: a review of application volumes by type, application turnaround times, staff workloads/responsibilities, LPAT history, current state of special projects and policy planning initiatives, review of the BruceGPS, review and assessment of the legislative and procedural basis for the current service delivery model, review and consideration of current operating and capital budgets for the Division; and,
4. Analysis and comparison of four (4) other counties in Southwestern Ontario by way of initial data collection and follow-up interview calls with land use planning Directors and/or Managers;
5. Three (3) meetings with the County Project Team (Director of Planning and Development Department, Manager of Land Use Planning Division, Corporate Strategic Initiatives Specialist).

It should be noted that findings and recommendations provided herein are guided by the responsibilities of the Planning Authority, as outlined in the *Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13* and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS, 2020), which sets the legislative and policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. Although no issue-specific policy recommendations have been expressed by Stantec in this review, any proposed process changes are intended to align with the responsibility of an upper-tier government as outlined in the *Act*. Additionally, the recommendations contained in this report are given with the anticipation that the Bruce County Land Use Planning Division will be working with a full staff complement. As of the day this report was completed, the division had two (2) vacancies to fill in order to achieve their complete staffing structure. Prioritizing, employing and optimizing the recommendations of this report should be considerate to staff's existing capacity.



# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## BACKGROUND

### 1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

The sections of this report are organized into themes that emerged from the early discussions with the County Project Team and the stakeholders/key informant interviews. In these report sections, we examine the Bruce County Land Use Planning Division's organization, provision of planning services on behalf of the County and to the local municipalities, financial considerations and aspects of education and engagement:

- **Background**
  - Provides an overview of the structure and key findings
- **Service Delivery and Divisional Structure**
  - Examines the legislative basis for planning, reviews the development and long-range/policy planning functions, and, looks at the current Divisional structure
- **Service Delivery Costs**
  - Examines the current financial support for development planning through application fees relative to cost
- **Education and Engagement**
  - Examines how the County relates to local municipality and community expectations and their understanding regarding the roles and responsibilities of the Division.
- **Summary of Recommendations**

### 1.4 KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

A summary of municipal stakeholder feedback is included in **Appendix A**. It outlines the detailed comments received from the local municipal staff during this review, organized by the sections presented in this report. In summary, the high-level themes that were heard often during these consultations included:

- Generally, local municipal Staff feel that the planning service being provided by the County Land Use Planning Division is good; there is an appreciation that County planning staff endeavour to provide timely and objective planning advice to the local municipal councils to utilize in their decision making in regard to planning development applications in their municipalities
- There are areas where local municipal staff feel that the service to their local municipality could be improved; in this regard, there is a great diversity of need in the various municipalities which have different character and different issues and needs; some of the themes for improvement included:
  - Land use planning inquiries and development planning applications are a constant factor to be addressed and the local municipalities depend on the County Land Use Planning Division to lead the management and processing of these applications.
  - Some municipalities could use more support in responding to planning and development inquiries and in interpreting their planning documents (e.g. their zoning by-law).
  - Some municipalities feel that their long-range plans, particularly their Official Plan and Community Improvement Plans, are not getting the attention they could and are becoming out of date and less relevant.



## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### BACKGROUND

- Some local municipalities indicated they would value improvement in communication about the nature and status of applications. Ideas for enhancement in this area could include ideas such as more dialogue with the local municipalities, in-person involvement of local staff at the time applications are being prepared/accepted, particularly during pre-consultation, cc'ing of local staff on emails to applicants, keeping local municipal staff aware of the status of applications, etc.
- There is a real interest to have each municipality's unique character and needs reflected in their planning documents and in the consideration of development planning applications.
- County planning staff must spend most of their available time responding to development planning applications for the local municipalities, thereby not being able to address the long-range planning needs of the County, particularly advancement of a new and up-to-date Official Plan.
- The previous challenge for County planning staff is compounded by a relatively high turnover of planning staff.

To better understand how the land use planning process is functioning in Bruce County in comparison with other County departments (some similar in structure, some different), interviews with four (4) other County planning directors or managers were conducted.

Some of the key findings from Stantec's review of the information include:

- Nuanced differences in application processing, department structure, and the roles and responsibilities of each County vs. local staff between (and among) each County provide a challenging base line to provide reasonable and accurate quantitative comparators. No other County planning department interviewed provides the exact same development review and long-range planning services as Bruce County as each have unique structures and service delivery models so a clear "apples to apples" comparison is difficult. That said, the comparators examined do offer a variety of services for lower-tier municipalities and the processes and procedures used by each to undertake these activities has provided opportunities for improvements that could be applied by Bruce County. A high-level, qualitative comparison of each County's delivery of roles is outlined in Table 1.
- With all vacancies filled, Bruce County employs a similar number of planning staff to comparator counties, whose staffing structures range from 8 to 13 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. The number and range of planning applications received and processed by Bruce County staff is within the range of observed in comparator counties.
- Comparator counties dedicate between 30-40% of staff time to long range planning work as provided by high-level assessments by the relevant Planning Directors. In each County (with the exception of Grey County), one to two planners have an assigned policy role in their title. All comparator counties indicated they saw value in ensuring all staff have opportunities to work in long-range, strategic planning roles in addition to development planning roles, and, all of the Counties practice this full-planning role approach. Such an approach is also viewed as a way to strengthen the delivery of work in both areas, to build overall department capacity, and, to broaden and make more diverse and interesting the planning roles thereby also contributing to position retention. In Bruce County, two Senior Planners have an assigned policy role in their titles; although, these positions have not been able to be fully utilized due to pressure from the development application workload.
- Bruce County is the only County that does not finance planning projects (e.g. growth-related studies) from Development Charges.





**Table 1: High-level Assessment of Comparator County’s Roles and Responsibilities**

County Comparators	Local Development Application Services	Local Policy/Long-Range Planning Services	County Development Application Services	County Policy/Long-range Planning Services
<b>BRUCE COUNTY</b>	Intake of local planning applications are done by County planning staff at “Hub” offices. County planning staff prepare and present reports to Committees of Adjustment or local Councils, as appropriate. These responsibilities are outlined in MOUs with each local municipality.	Through special agreements, County planning staff have been able to manage local 5-year OP reviews, but recently County staff lack capacity to fulfill desired long-range projects of local municipalities. As such, some local municipalities are contracting out their long-range planning projects. Additionally, un-disputed local OPA have been delegated to County planning staff.	County staff accept, write reports for, and present on consent applications to Land Division Committee, un-disputed consents have been delegated to County planning staff. Subdivision/Condominium applications are accepted, processed and presented to Councils by County planning staff.	County-wide longer range Policy Planning and Special Projects are provided by the County Planning Division, however, these services often cannot be prioritized due to the Division’s necessary focus on development review. This is based out of necessity, due to increasing application volumes, and, limitations due to work-load and staff capacity.
<b>HURON COUNTY</b>	Intake of minor variances and zone changes occur at the local level, with County planning staff preparing and presenting reports to Committees of Adjustment or local Councils. Site plan control is a carried out by the local municipality. Often when they are combined with other applications, the County planners are more involved. They write reports on site plans, if requested, based on a fee for service.	All Local Official Plan reviews and Municipal Zoning By-law updates are done in-house, by County planning staff. The department generally sticks to a schedule of doing two OP reviews and two ZB updates each year, to fit into the 5-year cycle. County planning staff are also responsible for local CIP updating. Un-disputed local OPA have been delegated to County planning staff.	County staff accept, write reports for, and present on consent applications to Land Division Committee, un-disputed consents have been delegated to County planning staff. Subdivision/Condominium applications are accepted, processed and presented to Councils by County planning staff.	Few updates to County-wide Official Plan are necessary due to the high-level nature of the County OP; their 5-year review and County-wide planning projects are completed largely in-house (e.g. cycling strategy, residential intensification strategy)
<b>GREY COUNTY</b>	Local-level planning applications are reviewed by the County, with the majority of the responsibility regarding application processing being managed at the local level. Regarding Site Plan Control, this is a local municipal process and these applications are not always circulated to County planners.	Local-level policy is managed at the local-level, with some local municipalities completing policy in-house and others hiring consultants should a full-time or part-time planner not be on staff. County is circulated for commenting.	Subdivision/Condominium applications are accepted, processed and presented to Councils by County planning staff for all local municipalities except Owen Sound.	County-wide policies are primarily monitored and reviewed in-house. If no in-house expertise, background studies have been contracted out, but the development of County policies are mostly done by County staff.
<b>OXFORD COUNTY</b>	County staff can accept applications for zone changes and prepare and present reports to local Councils. Minor variances are processed by the local municipality, with the County planners preparing and presenting reports to local Committees of Adjustment. Site plan control is largely administered by local municipal staff.	Local municipalities do not have their own Official Plans; County may partially fund and/or provide planning guidance on long-range projects (secondary plans, servicing studies); Municipal Zoning By-laws are updated by County planning staff.	County staff accept, write reports for, and present on consent applications to Land Division Committee; County staff also process all County Official Plan Amendments, and present to County Council and applicable local Council. Subdivision/Condominium applications are accepted, processed and presented to Councils by County planning staff.	County-wide policies are primarily monitored and reviewed in-house. If no in-house expertise, background studies have been contracted out (e.g. population projections).
<b>WELLINGTON COUNTY</b>	There are some Local Development Applications that County planning staff provide assistance with. In these cases, the County directly invoices the applicable local municipalities. Many applications are provided to the County through their statutory circulation of applications, which are not invoiced for.	Local municipalities are not obligated to have OPs, so many lower-tier municipalities are covered through County OP. Within the local municipalities, the Town of Erin has a complete Official Plan and the urban centres of Fergus, Elora and Salem have OPs (in Centre Wellington).	County Staff accept, process, and present on all County-level development applications to Planning Committee.	County-wide policies are primarily completed in-house by dedicated policy staff (only about 30% of County policy work is contracted out). For instance, a recent Climate Change Action Plan was done internally while an attainable housing plan, a strategic plan, and a Municipal Comprehensive Review were run by consultants.



# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## BACKGROUND

Additionally, a document review was also undertaken. Some of the key findings include:

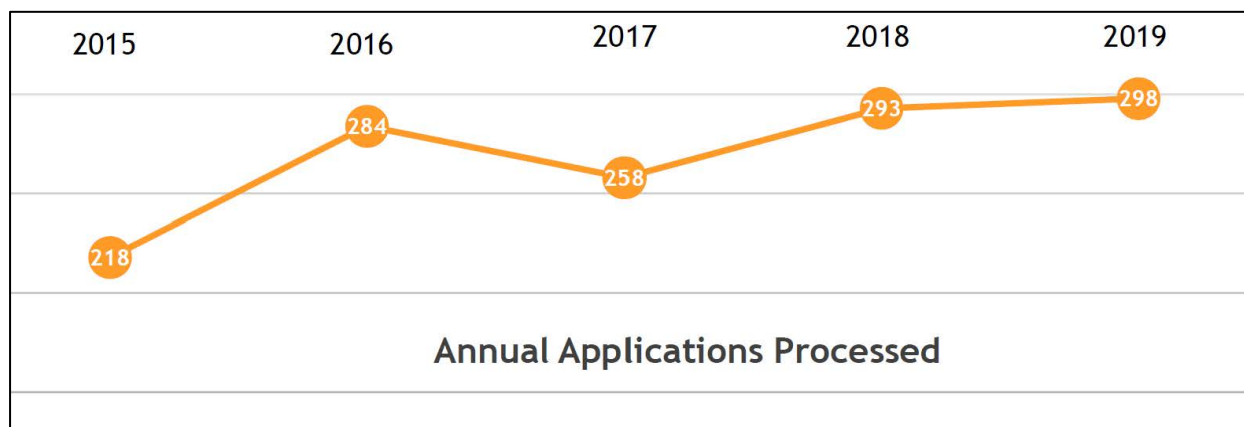
- The basis for the existing planning service delivery model was developed over 20 years ago through Memorandums of Agreement (MoAs) between the County and the local municipalities; it appears that the service model laid out in those agreements may have shifted over the years from what was originally intended.
- Development Application fees contribute a comparatively small proportion of the cost of providing development planning application processing, review and advisory services. This was not the intent of the original MoAs.
- Job descriptions are clear and well-crafted with emphasis placed on the processing of development applications for the entry-level and front-line job descriptions. Emphasis on long-range planning has traditionally received less emphasis within role descriptions. Recent changes have sought to address this, creating dedicated, senior roles for policy and long-range planning.

## 1.5 SPOTLIGHT ON BRUCE COUNTY GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Residential and employment growth is steadily increasing in the communities of Bruce County. The nearby Bruce Power facility has been a prime economic engine historically and ongoing refurbishment of the facility is driving renewed growth within a number of nearby communities. Other key drivers include seasonal tourism within shoreline communities and agricultural production further inland. This growth, however, does not manifest itself uniformly across the County. Varying degrees of growth, as well as expectations for managing that growth, are being felt by each local municipality in separate and distinct ways.

Bruce County land use planning staff are at the core of the conversation. They work to move development forward via the provision of professional, objective planning advice to County and local municipal councils. Staff are expected to make sound, informed and community-reflective recommendations which are rooted in the public interest. At the same time, they have a responsibility to reflect the unique context and local needs of each community – at both the County and local levels. The Planners work is to ensure that each communities' ideals are represented and expressed through the implementing requirements and standards.

**Figure 1: Annual Applications Processed**



# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

## 2.0 SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

Defining the balance between proactive planning and maintaining consistency and predictability in the decision-making process for the development industry becomes an increasing challenge over time. This review attempts to re-calibrate the service delivery model of the County's land use planning functions and service delivery model, to examine the quality of the services being provided to the County, local municipalities, agency partners, development stakeholders, and the greater public.

As County Planning Staff support local municipal development reviews through the processing and reporting to local councils on development applications in the respective communities, stakeholders at both levels of government were engaged to complete this review, as well as review agencies. A comparative analysis of other County-level planning departments was also used to gain an understanding of alternative approaches and evaluate possible solutions.

Stantec analyzed departmental structures of the County and the local municipalities, current Memorandums of Agreement (MoAs) and considered the typical job descriptions which are used to fill organizational planning position vacancies. Where information and data may have been lacking in this regard, Stantec sought qualitative feedback during key stakeholder interviews. This section outlines the finding and recommendations of Stantec's review of the County Land Use Planning Division organization.

### 2.1 LEGISLATIVE & PROCEDURAL UNDERSTANDING

Bruce County is a two-tier County. The responsibility and authority for undertaking planning and providing planning services in the County rests with both the County and the local municipality.

The County is responsible for translating provincial policy and requirements, and to reflect and apply a County-wide vision and related objectives through the County Official Plan. The County Official Plan is to provide input and direction to local municipal planning, and the local municipal Official Plans and Zoning By-laws are to conform to the County Plan. These planning tools allow each local municipality to translate the goals of the County OP and interpret them at the community level.

The Bruce County Land Use Planning Division's current organization is such that Staff provide a planning role directly to and for County Council. As well, planning services are provided by the County Land Use Planning Division to the eight (8) Local Municipalities. The provision of planning services by the County to the local municipalities is not a mandated authority as part of the Province's legislated County structure, or, the Planning Act, but is based on service delivery agreements enabled under the Planning Act.

We have reviewed several of the service delivery agreements (i.e. Memorandums of Agreement (MoA)). We note the following:

- The service delivery agreements were entered into the latter 1990's and so may not be current to existing policy, actual service delivery practices or provincial legislation.
- The key and only planning service to be provided by the County Planning function to the local municipalities is the "processing, review, reporting and recommending upon (local level) Official Plan (Amendments), Zoning By-law (Amendments) and Minor Variances...providing the local municipality (and in the latter instance the Committee of Adjustment) with recommendations on such applications".



## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

- All other legislated, enabled planning functions such as the development of an Official Plan, a comprehensive Zoning By-law, Community Improvement Plans, property standards (by-laws), Site Plan Control are the responsibility of the local municipality; the final authority to adopt a local level Official Plan, comprehensive Zoning By-law and Amendments thereto is retained by the Council of the local municipality.
- The service delivery agreements also provide for the County to prescribe a tariff of fees for the processing of applications, "...designed to meet the anticipated cost to the County with respect to processing of each type of application."
- The service agreement goes on to state that participation by the County planning function in any other special projects such as the development of local official plans, local comprehensive zoning by-laws, local secondary plans, etc. "will be arranged separate from this (service delivery) Agreement"; we have come to understand that there are some examples where such separate (project and financial) arrangements have been agreed upon between the County and the local municipality in advance of doing the special project work.
- The authority to approve draft plans of subdivision (and condominiums) rests at the County level; however, subsequent to entering into the service delivery agreements in the late 1990's, the County also adopted a By-law in 2001 assigning the responsibility to facilitate and hold the required public meeting for plan of subdivision applications to the local municipalities.
- The land division function rests with the County.

Stantec's observations from the key informant, Bruce County staff, and other County Comparator staff interviews and work completed to date include:

- It appears that there is little recollection or background retained on the original rationale for the current service delivery agreements at Bruce County; in fact, most if not all of the current local municipal staff would not have been around when these service delivery agreements were entered into.
- From our interviews with other Counties, Terms of Service and/or Service Agreements are sometimes used as agreements between Counties and a single lower-tier municipality, but the consistency and complexity of these agreements vary across Counties. The majority are very high-level and the services provided by the upper-tiers may have evolved since the original inception of the agreements.
- From our interviews with the various local municipalities within Bruce County, there appear to be a range of understandings and expectations of the respective roles and responsibilities of the County in regard to the MoAs and the provision of planning services.
- Some municipal contacts interviewed expressed an interest in additional assistance from County staff in supporting lower-tier policy work such as OP updates, zoning bylaw updates, Community Improvement Plan updates, etc.; others indicated little interest in the County taking this role.

Overall, given the age of the current agreements (as well as the fact that agreements do not seem to exist between all eight municipalities), a review of service delivery agreements is recommended to update and confirm the role of the County in local land use decision-making as well as to define what role the County should play in local long-range or policy planning activities. Updated considerations related to funding and cost recovery should also be considered. More discussion on this point is provided in the Cost section below.



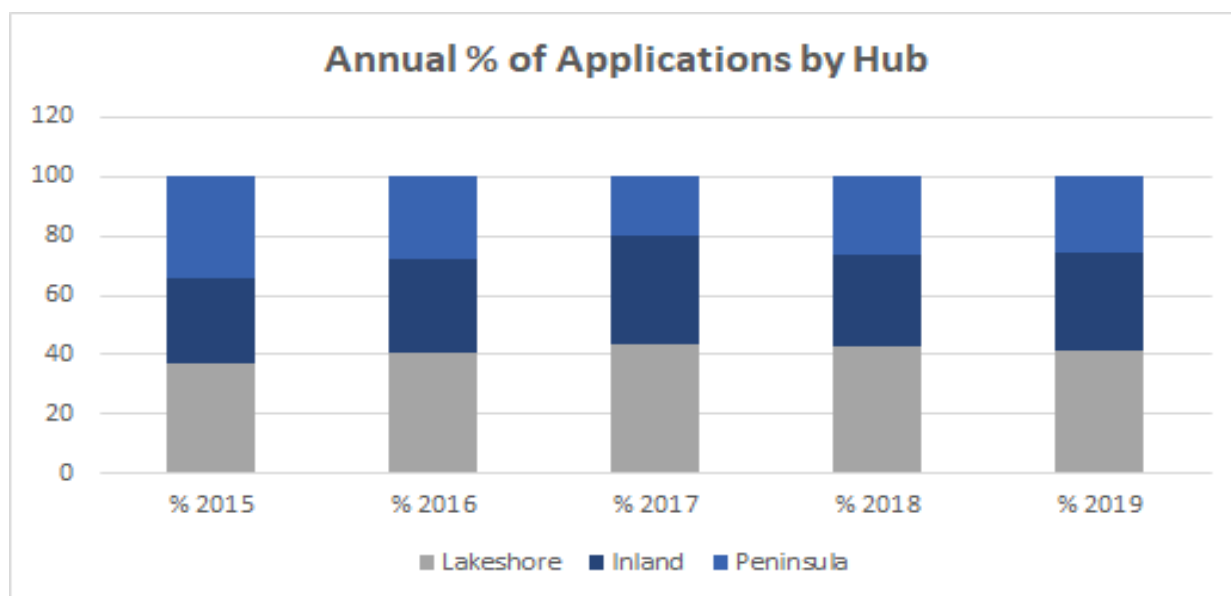
# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

### 2.2 DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

There is general agreement that one component of the planner's role is to process development applications from individual landowner's seeking changes in the use of their lands. The *Planning Act* establishes a basis for a streamlined development review process, which is intended to emphasize local autonomy in decision-making and ensure citizens' rights are maintained in the development process.

**Figure 2: Annual % of Applications by Hub**



In the County of Bruce, there has been a 37% increase in total applications processed over the past 5-year period (2015-2019) with a total of 295 applications in 2019 alone. The majority of applications seen by County Staff are severance applications (38% of total applications), followed by rezoning applications (28%) and minor variance applications (25% of total applications).

Of the three County Planning Hubs that process applications, the Lakeshore hub has averaged around 40% of all County Applications over the past 5 years, with the Inland hub receiving 32% of County Applications and the Peninsula Hub receiving 26% of the Applications.

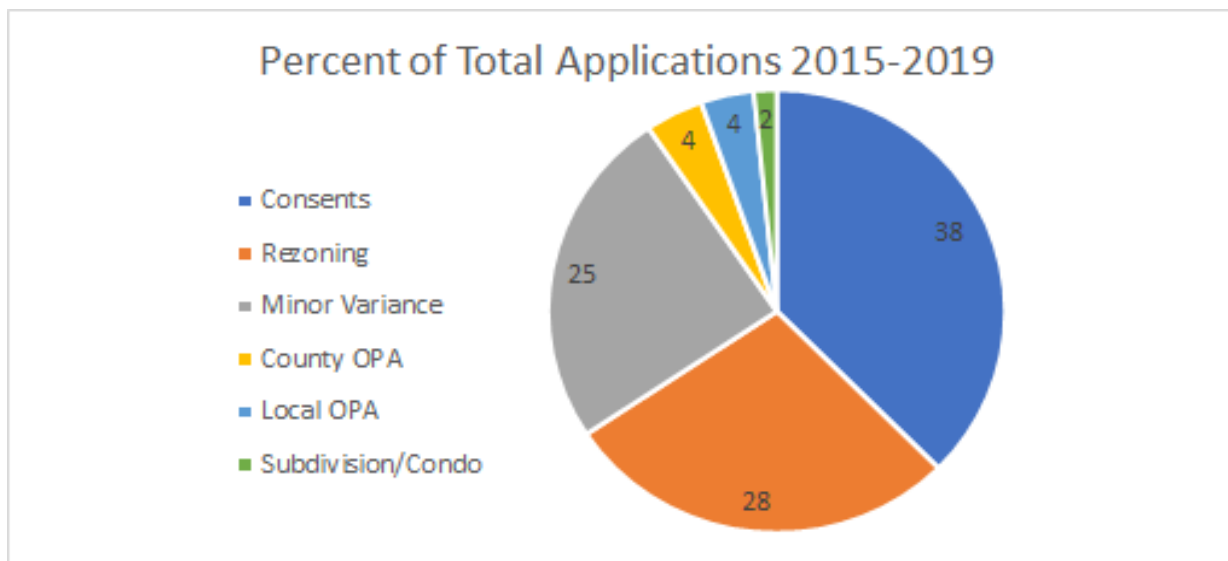
In terms of the type of applications, a large percentage (66%) of applications received by the County are consents and zoning by-law amendments. Approximately 25% are minor variances. Only 8% of applications are applications to amend either the local or County OP.

Tracking of annual applications received alone does not illustrate the entire role of the Land Use Planning Division as Planners do not only receive and process applications but are heavily relied on to assist with public inquiries prior to an application being submitted. In 2019, the Lakeshore Hub alone assessed 338 public inquiries.

## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

Figure 3: Percent of Total Applications 2015-2019



The amount of inquiries received also plays into the length of time the processing of applications takes as planners are balancing the assessment and communication related to potential applications, with that of working on processing existing applications. Overall, County staff are turning around applications readily and Stantec has received a significant amount of positive feedback in this regard. This has been due to process improvements as well as authority delegations to senior Staff provided by municipal Councils to support quicker and clearer decision-making and processing.

County planning staff also play a role in addressing and responding to public and provincial appeals and representing the municipality's decision where it aligns with the recommendations of the County planners and the goals and objectives of the County Official Plan. The majority of previous Provincial appeals and ongoing appeals surround the topic of lot creation in the Agricultural designation. While the number of appeals is not large, the time and effort required to participate in an active appeal process does take significant staff time.

Overall, feedback from municipal and agency stakeholders was positive and there is a high level of satisfaction with the Development Planning Application review service that the County provides, and, there is the observation that the level of service has improved in recent years. That said, stakeholders did indicate several areas of potential improvement. These include:

- On-hand / real-time tracking of applications would be useful to municipalities and applicants.
- Clearer role definition and coordination defining respective responsibilities of County and local municipal staff when an application comes in would be useful. Overall, role definition/clarification and communication could be improved.
- The intake process for applications differs from municipality to municipality. It is challenging for County Planning Staff to respond with differing levels of service to meet differing local municipal need. Recognizing different needs, and to the extent reasonable and manageable, some harmonization of the process would aid in clarity and consistency of the process for applicants, and, may realize some streamlining and potentially reduce County Planning Staff time in this part of the process."

## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

- The two external environmental agencies interviewed noted that they have some ideas they would like to discuss and explore to improve the planning process (e.g. more frequent use of Pre-Consultation).
- Notwithstanding the “Hub” structure for service delivery, additional opportunities for face-to-face connections are highly valued (even virtual face-to-face). More regular, scheduled office hours in (and for) each municipality would support more direct applicant discussions and serve to smooth out the intake process.
- There could be more public information (print, web, etc.) on planning process to inform applicants of steps in the process, the reasons for each step, background information requirements and timeline expectations.

During the comparator analysis, a significant driver of efficiency and streamlining of applications appeared to be the ability of the County Planning staff (typically department Directors/Managers) to employ the Council-delegated authority to staff to sign-off on applications which were “non-disputed”. While delegation of authority is provided to Bruce County staff in a number of instances, comparators (namely Huron County) have used this tool to a more expansive degree supporting significant reductions in processing time, and allowing planning staff more time to deal with more complex issues/applications.

#### 2.2.1 Recommendations

1. That the County continue to take a continuous improvement approach to seeking for and making improvements and adjustments to the existing Service Delivery model; ideas could include:
  - a) Developing standard terms of references for technical studies to accompany Complete Applications; with communication that discussing and obtaining agreement on tailored terms of reference to fit situational needs is encouraged.
  - b) Continue to monitor and report on the CityWorks digital application tracker for creating and sharing information on a public portal.
  - c) Work towards expanded and more regular office hours for County Planning Staff within all local municipality offices.
  - d) Continue to monitor the implementation of the recently updated “Delegation By-law” and the County’s approach to streamlining application processing by delegating un-disputed applications to staff for certain application types. Identify additional opportunities for delegation of approvals to support additional areas of efficiency.
2. That the County work with and assist local municipal staff, in delivery of some functions related to the Development Planning Application process to support streamlining the interface of service delivery between the local municipalities and the County. Specific function and roles should be agreed to and defined via updated Memorandums of Understanding.

### 2.3 LONG-RANGE/POLICY PLANNING

Planning, in a general sense, should promote sustainable development balancing economic, environmental and social considerations in a manner that protects and enhances quality of life for residents and visitors to the Bruce, and, that respects provincial legislative requirements, public health and safety and the quality of the natural and built environment. As such, County and local municipalities are required to establish policies that provide clear, reasonable and attainable approaches to ensure development is directed to suitable areas in an appropriate way.





## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

Creating capacity for long-range planning works to better define the future the County is looking achieve while also reducing the inefficiencies of “fixing” land use regulatory problems on a site-by-site basis. Stantec recommends that service delivery, process and organizational adjustments and changes (and strategic departmental integration) can also help to reduce processing timelines and serve to improve staff’s ability to work on long-range policy planning projects.

Currently long-range planning activities are limited by the unavailability of staff time to drive and support these activities. The County’s policy planning priorities focus primarily on County level policy development, most immanently the upcoming update to the County Official Plan. Staffing resources will need to be found to support this effort. At the same time, some local municipal stakeholders expressed an interest in having the County undertake policy work on their behalf. Some were under the understanding that this was a role delegated to the County in the existing MoAs (though it is not), indicating some shift in the perception of these agreements and the County’s role over time. If the County wishes to undertake policy work on behalf of the municipalities, additional resources will need to be found to support this additional work.

Traditionally the County’s three senior planners were assigned geographically to undertake supervision to junior staff, sign-off on applications and take the lead on more complicated or comprehensive files within each of the hub offices. Recently, two of the three senior planner positions have been re-designated to focus the majority of their time on policy and long-range planning functions (it is recommended that these planners maintain some role in development applications, though not a majority one going forward). At the same time, a Manager Land Use Planning position has been established with a clear role to provide additional division leadership to support process improvements and the future policy program.

This move is supported by the research that Stantec has undertaken for this report. Designating two policy planners emphasizes the importance of this function and recognizes the high level of experience necessary to undertake policy development and project management of large-scale activities, most of which include a significant amount of public engagement. The remaining senior planner will take the lead on development applications. This will require a greater level of involvement and support from the planner and technician roles as laid out above. In general, it is our feeling that this approach once fully implemented will support continued service delivery and meeting of provincially mandated turnaround times while at the same time resource a strong policy and long-range planning program. The manager role will provide additional resources while also supporting the Director of Planning and Economic Development by providing focused leadership and direction to planning staff in this area.

From Stantec’s interviews with comparable County’s, this approach mirrors some of the structures assessed in other upper-tier planning departments. There was a mix of organizational approaches for completing long-range planning initiatives, and no one clear model that was followed by all Counties studied. Similar themes for undertaking long-range policy projects included:

- Geographically assigning one planner to a lower-tier municipality with their position being a combination of policy-related work and development review.
- Many Counties have at least one (or more) designated policy planner, by title and job description. In many cases, the designated policy planner(s) would often still be involved with some development review, especially to work on complex or large files.
- In many instances, the policy planner would not be the primary County contact for policy-related projects at the lower-tier, as the assigned planner would fulfill that role, with support and guidance internally from the policy planner.





## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

- For projects that required external consultants to complete, a County planner would play a key role in either management of the project or providing advice and guidance to the lower-tier for a specific project. If the project was specific to a lower-tier, the assigned planner/development planner may be the primary contact with a consultant. For County-wide policy work, the assigned policy planner (e.g. senior policy planner or policy manager) is often the key external contact.
- Unofficial schedules for reviewing local official plans are sometimes developed, with the ability to be shifted with changing priorities.
- As is already practiced in Bruce County, providing information and updates to Councils when policies change at a Provincial level, was seen as an important way to inform and educate Council(s) and the public on legislation that may impact the implementation of County and local policies.

Through this review, some opportunities related to Official Plan policies across Bruce County were identified. Stantec believes that shifting some local Official Plan coverage to the County level could provide benefits through a more consistent approach to policy and as such should be explored via a legal opinion about the legislative basis for this change. As a case in point, currently, seven out of the eight local municipalities within Bruce County have already adopted the rural policies of the County Official Plan as the operative rural policies for their municipality. From the interviews conducted with other Counties, at least one other County has had many of local municipalities it serves, “up-delegate” responsibility to the County level through the County Official Plan serving as the official plan for that local municipality. This opportunity could also be explored with each local municipality separately through a review of the Memorandums of Service Agreements (MoAs).

### 2.3.1 Recommendations

1. Build capacity of all planners and technicians to support policy planning by providing opportunities to work part of their time on longer range policy type special projects (more on this in the Division Structure Section).
2. Reinforce and raise the profile and importance of policy planning; this can be done in a number of ways, for example, include long range policy planning initiatives/projects in annual Business Planning and annual reporting to County Council, and if possible, to local municipal Councils, including schedule objectives and monitoring of same.
3. Reinforce and clarify the process for communication between the County of Bruce and the Province on land use planning policy matters by:
  - a) Identifying the Manager as having responsibility for providing timely reports and advice to County Council on major Provincial policy initiatives or policy issues between the County and Province; such reports would provide, subject to Council approval and where appropriate, the County's position to the Province; and,
  - b) Identifying the Senior Policy Planners as having responsibility for consulting with appropriate Provincial staff as subject matter experts where needed to support County-specific policy development projects.
4. That the designation of two current senior planners to policy roles be maintained to drive the County's policy program going forward.
5. That the County explore opportunities related to integrating local official plan policies at the County level via 1) procurement of a legal opinion about the legislative basis for this approach, and; 2) engagement with local municipal stakeholders as part of the update process for the Memorandums of Agreements (MoAs).



# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

### 2.4 DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

The Bruce County Land Use Planning Division's staff complement is organized and distributed geographically into the three (3) hub offices-located in Brockton (Walkerton), Southern Bruce Peninsula (Wiarton) and Saugeen Shores (Port Elgin) and with each office staffed by an applications (planning) technician, a planner, and a senior planner. The Manager of the Land Use Planning Division is typically located in the Administrative Centre in Brockton but does make visits to the other offices on a regular basis. Job descriptions provided a further understanding of the various levels of planning positions and their relative responsibilities within the Division's structure. Additionally, qualitative feedback was provided through the staff interviews to provide a high-level assessment of staff workloads and capacities.

During the review, Stantec learned that the current Division Structure model is working well in terms of handling development planning application volume. With three "Hub" office locations spread out across the region, residents have the option for face-to-face interaction with planning staff within a reasonable commute. That said, input suggests that having "Hub" planners more regularly present in local municipality offices would allow for more consistent and accessible engagement with both local resident and local municipal staff.

It was also said that the benefits of the current service delivery model may work best for more seasoned developers and builders, and, not necessarily so for the public at-large. Furthermore, comparable Counties echoed the sentiment that the presence of County staff in the local offices on a regularly scheduled basis (an approach practiced by all four Counties interviewed) added value to their collective service delivery, improved customer service, and maintained strong inter-staff relationships. The frequency of the scheduled office times varies across the different Counties assessed. It is important to note that no other County interviewed have a "Hub" model of satellite County offices. In the other Counties, planning staff would be working in a centralized County office, if not working out of their respective, scheduled local municipal office(s). In Bruce County, it was requested by the local municipalities that clarity be provided to distinguish the services provided by local municipal offices and County "Hub" centres, as this would assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities between the County Land Use Planning Division and the local level Staff.

Under the current geographical "Hub" model, staff must address the volumes of applications processed through their "Hub". More contentious/complex applications are overseen by the senior planner, while the planner on staff carries several applications through the development review process. Each office also has an Applications Technician who receives the applications, providing the important front-line customer service role. While this model provides geographic coverage across the County, application volumes vary from hub to hub and ability to shift staffing resources from one hub to another is difficult given the knowledge of local Official Plans and zoning bylaws that is required.

Currently there exists some inconsistency in the front-line administrative approach, with each local municipality having its own set of front-line procedures dictated by history, need, and the nature and volume of development applications by type. This creates challenges for applicants. A more standardized approach to the intake and handling of planning matters along with a more consistent role for local staff in that intake process across the County would improve ease of use for applicants.

The position of Applications Technician appears unique to Bruce County when compared to other County planning departments. Often, applications take time 'in queue', waiting for a file to be opened and determined 'complete' under the Planning Act. Having three positions fulfilling this administrative role in the three Hub offices across the County improves application flows, response times, circulation, etc. Comparing this role to other County departments, which tend to rely more on administrative staff, Applications Technicians offer more technically proficient, geographically responsible staff member to support



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### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

application processing. Given their skill set, it is suggested that this role could be augmented through greater training and mentoring to allow for Technicians to provide a greater range of services. This could include playing a larger role in the processing of applications as well as supporting larger, strategic projects, and, providing technical or analytical support for the Division when undertaking long-range policy work. This would improve service delivery, provide for career growth and development and foster succession planning within the Division.

Additionally, the Bruce County Land Use Planning Division has consistently experienced high staff turn-over specifically in the planner positions. Feedback from stakeholders indicated that one contributor to this outcome likely relates to the fact that a planner's role is focused almost exclusively on the processing of applications, with some emphasis on the more administrative aspects of applications circulation, or, on simpler types of applications such as severances and minor variances. The processing of these types of applications may not support a varied and challenging workday or career progression for these staff. Increasing the role of Application Technicians to undertake a greater role in processing these applications would potentially free up time to allow planners to play increased roles in future policy planning or special projects in addition to application processing work. This would support more varied work conditions, staff attraction and retention, as well as support internal hiring and succession planning over time.

#### 2.4.1 Recommendations

1. That the County undertake a review of existing Memorandum of Service Agreements with the objectives of clarifying respective roles and responsibilities, understanding the addressing of long-range policy and other similar planning initiatives (e.g. local Official Plans, Community Improvement Plans, etc.) and the financial basis on which such service model is delivered.
2. That the County consider enhancing the role of the Applications Technician to:
  - a) Play a stronger role with applicants, supporting them through the application process.
  - b) Develop and empower them to undertake additional tasks in the processing of straightforward applications such as severances and minor variances.
  - c) Provide technical support (land use analysis, data review, GIS, etc.) for long-range, land use planning projects in addition to the support being provided for development review.
3. That the planner function be elevated to take on a greater role in application processing (with oversight and mentoring from the Senior Development Planner). Also, that a portion of planner time be devoted to support long-range and policy planning functions to support skill development, job variety, and ultimately support staff attraction and retention.



# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## SERVICE DELIVERY COSTS

### 3.0 SERVICE DELIVERY COSTS

#### 3.1 FEES AND COST RECOVERY

As stated previously, the Division's current service delivery was established through a number of agreements with lower-tier municipalities, most dating back to the late 1990s. While there is some variation between the agreements reviewed, the actual execution of services has evolved somewhat since then. These originating agreements delegate to the County, "...authorities, responsibilities, duties and functions... for the processing, review, reporting and recommending on Official Plan and Zoning By-Law applications... and, providing the Council of the Local Municipality with recommendations on such applications; b) the responsibility for processing, review, reporting and recommending upon matters to Committee(s) of Adjustment..."

Funding of these functions was envisioned by these agreements via the County collecting fees and/or charges that, "...shall be designed to meet the anticipated cost to the County with respect to the processing of each type of application."

Given this assessment, a preliminary review of the funding model for planning services within the County was undertaken.

The Planning and Development Department includes functions related to Economic Development and Land Use Planning. Table 2 below focuses on only the portion of the Departmental Operating Budget allocated to the Land Use Planning function/Division. The Land Use Planning Division takes in revenue related to application fees and charges which support, in part, the cost of the delivery of these services. The table below provides a summary of actual and budgeted land use planning-related expenditures, total revenue from fees and charges and a calculation of the percentage of those costs recovered through applicable charges.

**Table 2: Summary of Actual and Budgeted Land Use Planning-Related Expenditures 2016-2019**

	2016 Actual	2017 Actual	2018 Budget	2019 Adopted
Land Use Planning Program Expenditures	\$1,285,224	\$1,321,113	\$1,755,688	\$1,943,101
Fees and Charges Revenue	\$266,488	\$252,707	\$234,000	\$242,500
Percentage Recovery	21%	19%	13%	12%

In general, actual recovery amounted to approximately 20% of total costs in 2016 and 2017 (the most recent years that actuals are available). Budgeted recoveries in 2018 and 2019 actually see a decrease due to a budgeted increase in departmental expenditures (driven by new initiatives that include BruceGPS, Natural Heritage and LEAR) coupled with only minor increases in projected fee revenue.

## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SERVICE DELIVERY COSTS

Application fee increases are by limited by design, as the County Fee By-law limits increases to those seen in Statistics Canada's Annual Consumer Price Index. Based on this, the increase between 2019 and 2020 is expected to be 1.7%.

Overall, this equates to the County subsidizing the provision of these planning services to the lower-tier municipalities through the County tax base rather than through user fees as was intended by the original agreements establishing this practice. While taxes at the municipal and County level are paid by the same residents, this current practice may raise issues of equity as taxpayers in slower-growing areas fund a service that is being used at a proportionally higher rate by faster-growing areas.

A review of the current fee structure and future increases with an aim to covering a greater proportion of current expenditures may now be warranted in order to meet the original intent of the agreements that established the current service delivery model. From Stantec's review of other comparable Counties, user fee recovery rates relative to planning costs ranged from 13% to 40%. Some other Counties undertake regular fee review processes and ensure that an assessment of actual service delivery costs are considered in their relation to the fees (undertaken every five years for example).

A revised fee structure would provide revenue to better support current development application activities, allowing County taxpayer funding to be directed in support of resources needed to implement a County-level program of policy development.

That said, it's important to note that the originating agreements establishing the County's role in land use planning at the local level, did not anticipate the County undertaking planning work beyond the processing of applications. The original agreements reviewed state that:

*It is agreed that any authority, responsibility, etc., of a planning nature such as community improvement plans, property standards, site plan control, the authority to adopt Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws and Amendments thereto, under the Planning Act or any other Act, which is not specifically mentioned above, shall be retained by the Council of the Local Municipality.*

While this approach has evolved somewhat, with County planning staff playing a role in zoning bylaw and policy updates at the local level (though this is limited significantly by current resourcing constraints) this was not the original intent of the agreements. That said, feedback provided by municipal stakeholders indicated that a number would see value in having County staff undertaken certain policy projects on their behalf as it would save them from staffing up to manage or undertake this type of activity. Other municipalities indicated that they would prefer to undertake this policy work themselves. Given this split interest there may be an opportunity to develop a model that would see the County undertake this type of work for interested lower-tier municipalities on a cost recovery basis. This would provide a wanted service to some, while ensuring fairness for those municipalities not availing themselves of this option.

Based on this, we would recommend that discussions related to the Memorandums of Understanding also include discussions with lower-tier municipalities regarding a new funding model related to longer-range and policy planning work undertaken by County staff funded by each municipality on a project-specific basis. Depending on the scale of services requested, the County may need to undertake the development of a multi-year work plan that forecasts specific resourcing needs and project timelines to determine staffing requirements and/or consultant costs to undertake.

In addition to fee revenue, development charges also play a role in supporting the costs of planning work within the County. Currently our understanding is that Development Charges are collected at the lower-tier municipal level and only exist within a small proportion of communities. Those that do exist are focused largely on infrastructure cost recovery and may not include provision for certain soft costs which may support longer-term planning activities. These activities could cover a range of growth-related reporting and

## REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### SERVICE DELIVERY COSTS

studies which could provide resources on an area or project-specific basis for staffing or consultant costs that help to bolster local planning capacity. Bruce County was one of the only Counties reviewed in our County comparison that does not collect fees for planning studies through development charges.

#### 3.1.1 Recommendations

1. That the County consider a review of planning application fees, increasing them to levels adequate to cover a greater share of the County's application processing service costs. The aim should be full cost recovery, however, given the profile of applications this may not be possible.
2. That the County begin discussions with lower tier municipalities, through the recommended update to Memorandums of Understanding, to refine the current funding model and practices for longer-range and policy planning services undertaken by the County on their behalf. This could include charges paid by the lower tier to support County staff management of Official Plan or Zoning Bylaw updates on a cost recovery basis. Municipalities not interested in the County playing this role/providing this service would not be required to support this function.
3. That, if the County establishes a Development Charge, it includes soft costs for growth-related plans or studies, where appropriate.

# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

### 4.0 EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

#### 4.1 EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

This review also aims to understand and assess how the Bruce County Land Use Planning Division manages and communicates to County Council, the local municipalities (Councils and staff) and the communities it serves regarding the Division's purposes, roles and responsibilities in delivering planning services and providing independent, professional planning advice.

We heard through the stakeholder consultations that there was some sense that the requirement to apply a “one-size-fits-all” Provincial Policy meant that at times such an approach conflicted with being able to realize outcomes more appropriate to the Bruce County context. There was a sense that this conflict at times impeded the realization and reinforcement of the unique and strong Bruce County identity. As well, we also heard that some local municipalities want to reflect and reinforce their own unique local municipal character and identity in their planning approach. A few stakeholders suggested that they felt at times the County planners were too “hands on” in influencing their planning affairs, yet other local municipalities noted they want more guidance and support from County Planning than what is currently being offered. Clarification of roles and responsibilities in these areas of inconsistent understanding and expectations would help in addressing these diverse types of concerns.

For Stantec's review of other County organizations, all Counties interviewed reinforced the importance and value of on-going education of Councils, stakeholders and the community regarding planning, the role of planners, the planning process(s), etc.; the Counties all had varying and different approaches and ideas on how to do this. Some approaches that were outlined in the review include:

- Informing Councils on the implications of legislative changes (through reports), as they come out from the Province, to enable Councilors to ask targeted questions about specific Provincial direction and its relation to the County/local policies.
- Annually reporting on the tasks undertaken by the department in the preceding year, which was undertaken with varying levels of formality and detail.
- Providing Planning 101 sessions, new Council training, ‘speed dating’ type sessions each time new Councils are elected.
- Dedicated presentations by topic or interest (e.g. “hot topics”) to community and stakeholder groups or planning committees, upon request. Examples of topics include: climate change, aggregates, affordable housing, etc.

The public's perception is important and therefore so is managing how the Division's roles and functions are portrayed, communicated and understood in the public realm. This could include how planning recommendations are being formally communicated through reports and studies, and how the Division is more informally represented on public forums like websites and social media. More fundamentally, this should also include taking and making opportunities to explain “good planning”, including the benefits of good development review, and, how solid long-range planning contributes to good development review, and ultimately, good community growth and change. The recommendations of this section aspire to improve the general impression that the organization presents to the public, to increase awareness of the role of planning and foster positive and progressive dialogue in land use planning matters.





# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

### 4.1.1 Recommendations

1. That the County consider addressing knowledge gaps with annual reporting to County and Local Councils on the services offered to them in the previous year, including summaries of application volumes and types, work and status on long-range planning initiatives, and, special projects, with an explanation of the fees/costs and achievement of timelines of those services, initiatives and projects; explanation of the planner's role and responsibilities in providing these services, including the ethical considerations in relation to professional responsibility and to realizing the "public good".
2. That the County work to communicate how policy planning and special policy projects are contributing to the realization of land use planning vision, goals and objectives and thereby helping to shape and retain the unique character of Bruce County and its local municipalities.
3. That the County, in concert with the local municipalities, consider the creation of citizen application guides explaining development application process, why it's important and what to expect (e.g. time frames of the Planning Act) in response to the community push back regarding processing timelines.
4. That the County and local municipalities consider providing clarity on websites for the appropriate land use/development contact information, by application type or policy/special project.
5. That the County work with local municipalities to improve the annual business planning process by making it more interactive and a shared process. The idea of improving this process would be to better understand and organize for the County's, and the local municipalities', goals, plans, work projects and directions in relation to land use planning, thereby contributing to a realistic and integrated Land Use Planning Division business plan.

# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Relative to Bruce County's Land Use Division's role, structure and service delivery model, Stantec has presented options and recommendations to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the Division and generate additional capacity and awareness for Bruce County to facilitate the growth of communities across the County.

#### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE – DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

NO.	Recommendations
1	<p>That the County continue to take a continuous improvement approach to seeking for and making improvements and adjustments to the existing Service Delivery model; ideas could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Developing standard terms of references for technical studies to accompany Complete Applications; with communication that discussing and obtaining agreement on tailored terms of reference to fit situational needs is encouraged.</li><li>b) Continue to monitor and report on the CityWorks digital application tracker for creating and sharing information on a public portal.</li><li>c) Work towards expanded and more regular office hours for County Planning Staff within all local municipality offices.</li><li>d) Continue to monitor the implementation of the recently updated "Delegation By-law" and the County's approach to streamlining application processing by delegating un-disputed applications to staff for certain application types. Identify additional opportunities for delegation of approvals to support additional areas of efficiency.</li></ul>
2	<p>That the County work with and assist local municipal staff, in delivery of some functions related to the Development Planning Application process to support streamlining the interface of service delivery between the local municipalities and the County. Specific function and roles should be agreed to and defined via updated Memorandums of Understanding.</p>

# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE – LONG-RANGE/POLICY PLANNING

NO.	Recommendations
1	Build capacity of all planners and technicians to support policy planning by providing opportunities to work part of their time on longer range policy type special projects (more on this in the Division Structure Section).
2	Reinforce and raise the profile and importance of policy planning; this can be done in a number of ways, for example, include long range policy planning initiatives/projects in annual Business Planning and annual reporting to County Council, and if possible, to local municipal Councils, including schedule objectives and monitoring of same.
3	Reinforce and clarify the process for communication between the County of Bruce and the Province on land use planning policy matters by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Identifying the Manager as having responsibility for providing timely reports and advice to County Council on major Provincial policy initiatives or policy issues between the County and Province; such reports would provide, subject to Council approval and where appropriate, the County's position to the Province; and,</li> <li>b) Identifying the Senior Policy Planners as having responsibility for consulting with appropriate Provincial staff as subject matter experts where needed to support County-specific policy development projects.</li> </ul>
4	That the designation of two current senior planners to policy roles be maintained to drive the County's policy program going forward.
5	That the County explore opportunities related to integrating local official plan policies at the County level via 1) procurement of a legal opinion about the legislative basis for this approach, and; 2) engagement with local municipal stakeholders as part of the update process for the Memorandums of Agreements (MoAs).

### SERVICE DELIVERY AND DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE – DIVISIONAL STRUCTURE

NO.	Recommendations
1	That the County undertake a review of existing Memorandum of Service Agreements with the objectives of clarifying respective roles and responsibilities, understanding the addressing of long-range policy and other similar planning initiatives (e.g. local Official Plans, Community Improvement Plans, etc.) and the financial basis on which such service model is delivered.
2	That the County consider enhancing the role of the Applications Technician to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Play a stronger role with applicants, supporting them through the application process.</li> <li>b) Develop and empower them to undertake additional tasks in the processing of straightforward applications such as severances and minor variances.</li> <li>c) Provide technical support (land use analysis, data review, GIS, etc.) for long-range, land use planning projects in addition to the support being provided for development review</li> </ul>
3	That the planner function be elevated to take on a greater role in application processing (with oversight and mentoring from the Senior Development Planner). Also, that a portion of planner time be devoted to support long-range and policy planning functions to support skill development, job variety, and ultimately support staff attraction and retention.



# REVIEW OF BRUCE COUNTY LAND USE PLANNING DIVISION – STRUCTURE, SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### SERVICE DELIVERY COSTS

NO.	Recommendations
1	That the County consider a review of planning application fees, increasing them to levels adequate to cover a greater share of the County's application processing service costs. The aim should be full cost recovery, however, given the profile of applications this may not be possible.
2	That the County begin discussions with lower tier municipalities, through the recommended update to Memorandums of Understanding, to refine the current funding model and practices for longer-range and policy planning services undertaken by the County on their behalf. This could include charges paid by the lower tier to support County staff management of Official Plan or Zoning Bylaw updates on a cost recovery basis. Municipalities not interested in the County playing this role/providing this service would not be required to support this function.
3	That, if the County establishes a Development Charge, it includes soft costs for growth-related plans or studies, where appropriate.

### EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

NO.	Recommendations
1	That the County consider addressing knowledge gaps with annual reporting to County and Local Councils on the services offered to them in the previous year, including summaries of application volumes and types, work and status on long-range planning initiatives, and, special projects, with an explanation of the fees/costs and achievement of timelines of those services, initiatives and projects; explanation of the planner's role and responsibilities in providing these services, including the ethical considerations in relation to professional responsibility and to realizing the "public good".
2	That the County work to communicate how policy planning and special policy projects are contributing to the realization of land use planning vision, goals and objectives and thereby helping to shape and retain the unique character of Bruce County and its local municipalities.
3	That the County, in concert with the local municipalities, consider the creation of citizen application guides explaining development application process, why it's important and what to expect (e.g. time frames of the Planning Act) in response to the community push back regarding processing timelines.
4	That the County and local municipalities consider providing clarity on websites for the appropriate land use/development contact information, by application type or policy/special project.
5	That the County work with local municipalities to improve the annual business planning process by making it more interactive and a shared process. The idea of improving this process would be to better understand and organize for the County's, and the local municipalities', goals, plans, work projects and directions in relation to land use planning, thereby contributing to a realistic and integrated Land Use Planning Division business plan.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Municipal Stakeholder Summary**

# Municipal Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Structure and Organization

Strong feeling that recent staff changes have encouraged a model of collective goals/objectives - working together as opposed to against the County

In inland municipalities, downtown businesses are struggling, as they do not gain an economic benefit from tourism like the shoreline municipalities do.

Generally, the relationship between staff at the County and the local municipality has been great, although there is a fear of becoming adversarial as the political climate can change quickly.

County does all planning applications - applicants previously went straight to County; now send query to local staff first to determine what applications needed and then go to County

Local staff only contact County for interpretation issues; Local staff only made aware of applications when County reaches out for comments - not copied by applicant or county when application has been received by County staff.

Steady number of applications, spring heavy with rezoning and public meetings

Receive an even number of consents and rezoning, not may minor variances

Communication between County and Local level during initial review period feels circuitous at times

High amount of applications for minor variances (mostly) and zoning amendments. Only instances of public waiting on applications is with regards to a planner's leave of absence/planner turnover - however recognize that planner's workload is very high due to sharing of planner amongst municipalities

Opportunity to streamline review process at beginning so local and county are not duplicating review efforts; and for improvement on initiation at the onset of an inquiry (e.g. public relations)

When high amount of application volumes, general feeling that the staffing can manage the load (processing applications within the required timeframe) but done at the expense of providing good customer service.

Recently "embarked on a period of growth" which has created confusion, and uncovered complexities within the planning process.

Many of the complex projects that are being undertaken in the municipality receive attention from the more senior planners on staff in the Division.

Many people speculating/buying a lot come into local offices for questions

Local level tracks every inquiry received, pulls property information and saves in file for future inquiries/future land purchases of same property

Having access to planning application documents at county level would be helpful when assisting walk-ins/public inquiries/providing comments or even to know what has happened on a property in the past

When influx of one type of application, local level reviews own by-law to determine inconsistencies

County turn-over of young staff due to no social environment or social network for younger people (20s/30s) in Bruce County

- Need focus on professional development of young staff to be able to grow and retain as senior staff down the road

# Municipal Stakeholder Engagement Summary

- Recommendation of entrepreneurship and innovation discussion groups/mentorship investment
- Opportunity** for Open GIS data system to help track development in county and achieve more degree of accuracy
- Own secondary plans for urban areas but refer to County OP for everything else
- Any reoccurring issues, review of policy is done and reassessed to reduced need for applications (2018 review most recent)
- hired outside consultants to complete these reviews
- total of 20 - 25 applications ins a year
- Weakness** to not have dedicated planner in immediate resources but at same time best way to share resources as local level could not obtain own

Service Delivery  
Model -  
Development  
Review

**Strengths**

For application processing, the efficiency of assigned planner was commended despite recent increase in application volumes; long processing timelines remains a major concern for local Council; public’s awareness of expected processing timelines could improve with additional guidance; better on-hand data/ real-time tracking of applications

**Weaknesses**

Provision of County services has been much improved in recent years; intent and principles of policies and by-laws sometimes do not connect with final report recommendations

**Opportunities**

Initial development process disjointed - many agencies involved but not from the forefront

**Threats**

**Public has hard time understanding planning act and planning approvals process as a whole** - leads to misunderstanding when reaching out to County and requires more guidance through process

**Process for getting approvals is disjointed** - going from County for some approvals, back to local, then to conservation authority - **opportunity** to streamline process from beginning

Pre-consultation only held for large applications and usually for developers who has own planners (not for the average public) - **opportunity** to make process easier for average public to go through

Utilizing digital systems to coordinate pre-con meetings with all relevant parties would help process run more smoothly - **opportunity**

Applications - County good at sticking to timeframes

**Opportunity** - record timeline of applications and make measurable performance measures to determine how/where to improve (local level could be involved in helping improve processes if local level was informed by progress reports)

- planning process is constantly under attack so this could also be something they could positively show for\

**Opportunity** for County to assist in natural heritage role/archaeology role as no agency ‘owns’ this type of work - could become expert or hire expert to do this work within County for lower-tier development

Have no complaints with timelines for processing applications. Recognize that they are not overwhelmed with applications in their municipality.



# Municipal Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Some discussion on the provincial direction on farm severances (more specifically the sizes of surplus farm lots), and how the provincial direction is implemented locally. **It is a known policy conflict between the desired growth of their municipality vs. Provincial direction.**

Thoughts about whether land use planning reports should be broken up to explain: 1. what parts of the recommendations cannot change (are law); and 2. what parts are flexible, and County may be able to provide input into (and there may be options for).

Regarding the accessibility of the planners, office hours for pre-consultation meetings 1-2 times/month to accommodate those residents who cannot readily travel to the County Hub Office. **Lack of face-to-face interaction with the public when coming for inquiries is a challenge.**

**Seeing a steady decline of the type of services being offered locally (office visits, plan review assistance)**

**Opportunity** for improved onboarding of planners to become aware of municipal development history (timing is **threat** now)

Would be a strength for county planner to have local office hours

**Great planners over the years, high rate of turnover, which leaves room for errors** but once planner gets comfortable, **they do a good job**

**Would like more availability of the planner for questions.**

Received public complaints of timelines taking up to a year - staff recognize this could be due to incomplete application(s) and exaggerated as public are disgruntled over having to even submit planning application to begin with

Keeping lines of communication open is key to local staff being able to work efficiently and timely - disconnect between County/Applicant and local level; **local staff do not know the background or applicant well before working on application (i.e. site plan control application/agreements)**

Less hands-on at local level in Bruce County than at other Counties

**Suggest adapting an approach where everyone is involved from the forefront - best when everyone is part of bigger/broader conversation**

Accessibility of Planner: ½ day, twice a month the planner comes into the office to discuss current projects - publicly advertised so that residents can book time during those two days to discuss planning matters

New application processing tool has some kinks that still need to be worked out (e.g. collection of application fees), and **the launching of the system was not well communicated by the County.**

**Inquires and informal pre-consultation meetings were better facilitated when there was a planner with regular office hours at the Local office. Over time, their presence locally has diminished. For example, it was one day per week but now face-to-face meetings with planners are done on an ‘as needed’ basis.**

**Opportunity** to have someone come into the office more frequently to help fulfil the customer service role and provide face-to-face interactions.

**Requesting additional detail in the site plan application sketches is an example or where efficiencies can be found.**

# Municipal Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Very positive relationship with County staff

2007-2008 used to hold regular office hours for county staff - took this for granted as this kind of availability was helpful to local staff and public. However, more presence of planner in office wouldn't necessarily make a big significant change - online and calling works fine now

Recommendation

- Find commonalities amongst and determine strengths/opportunities to provide technical/specialty areas at the County level - lower level would find it helpful (similar to how SVCA can provide feedback on env. related studies)
  - o i.e. Archaeological management - find it expensive and difficult get this but maybe County could get expertise on this and provide this

When thinking of service delivery model, thinking of County as consultants and local level as clients

Service Delivery  
Model - Policy  
Review

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

Respecting agricultural roots, while planning for growth of rural Towns/communities and smaller rural centres can be a challenge, as there may be conflicting uses between agricultural practices and rural residential uses

For special projects, local municipality feels that they could be more informed of ongoing County efforts (e.g. Bruce Power component replacement project)

Out-of-date local policy documents; may still be some conflicts between local vision/goals vs. County's; little time/staff capacity to fully define local vision/goals

Adversarial position when County planners publicly speak to/recommend updates to local OPs, as the public sees them representing the County's opinion and questions their ability to adequately represent the local interest. This could be solved by using external consultants and/or employing PR-type firm to help with engagement.

Local staff and Council feel that there is a disconnect between policy ("motherhood statements") and standards (which are black and white).

Seems to be a disconnect in how the justification and background (root) of policy direction is being communicated to the local municipality.

Require clarity in the roles and responsibilities (between County and local municipality) regarding who takes the lead on monitoring the implementation of local policy objectives (e.g. CIP updates).

Opportunity for County to further engage local municipalities during County Policy updates

County unable to assist with local level policy update (ZBA and CIP) as too busy and unavailable to assist

Shoreline development/planning for shoreline protection is controversial (ZBL hasn't been updated in 10+ years due to shoreline protection pushback from existing owners/residents)

Regarding long-range planning, could use updated ZBL and new local Official Plan. Existing policy does not address a lot of the issues dealing with now (e.g. shipping containers)

Previous ZBL update(s) became too political

Lack of conservation authority to regulate shoreline so falls on planners, which can be a challenge for long-range planning

# Municipal Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Local municipalities can see benefits and downsides to the County fulfilling role in Local long-range planning. On one hand, they have experience with the specific region, while on the other, the Local municipality may be looking for innovative ideas from an external perspective. When recent decisions were made to outsource project recently (i.e. Comprehensive zoning bylaw), it was due to staffing capacity at the County level.

Options to have local planner on staff have been entertained in the past, to provide a better customer service function (and not necessarily to improve capacity of long-range planning).

Minor variances are not meeting planning deadlines

Local level and county disagree with issuing of timelines - local would like to stick to 20-day as per planning act and not 40-day that County sometimes allows

Local level completes/leads a lot of policy review and invites County to comment

Very rare for local level and County to want to focus efforts in different areas

Long-range Planning - comfortable with where county/local level is going, not so much with where they are

Slow process to get policy moving forward (public comments, advisory committee set up, engagement, analysis, etc.)

Seasonal communities a challenge when wanting public consultation on policy - aiming for consultation in summer months is different than most municipalities that avoid consultation in summer months

Happy with local Ongoing projects

Senior staff also doing ‘grunt’ work that could be done by junior staff and not given enough time to dedicate to strategic planning

Try to keep documents as up to date as possible (OP 2018/ ZBL 2017)

New local growth and master servicing plan (how to direct people to live in full-service areas)

Local level is the ‘general contractor’ for all local policy

Hoping to get County growth forecasts/employment numbers done by Watson to assist with this

Local planning demands insider knowledge, which is difficult when disconnect between County and local level

Internal staff guide internal policies to meet local needs but want knowledge and expertise from County on specialized topics

Bruce Lens - would like a ‘municipal lens’ to be placed within ‘County Lens’

- didn’t feel consulted when came out with ‘Bruce Lens’ and felt like review was separate process from local level involvement

improve county and local level communication - feeling that some policy development at county level is duplicate of what local level already has done - opportunity

# Municipal Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Prefer to have individual consultants that are able to cater to local level and are able to meet local level deadlines as the consultant is only focused on one municipality rather than being pulled in multiple directions by multiple local levels of government like the County

## Education, Identity and Public Perception

### Strengths

Higher-level Council vision for land use planning not often communicated from County to local Councils, typically development-specific conversations; costs of LPAT process may be unknown

### Weaknesses

County struggles to find a consistent identity: one that provides appropriate local autonomy in decision-making and respects local municipality implementation of own documents, while providing the necessary amount of oversight, professional advice, and monitoring capacity that may be needed/desired by the local municipalities. Local Municipalities have varying needs; and therefore, rely on the County in varying capacities.

### Opportunities

### Threats

Council County and staff are dealing with tension between needs and desires of shoreline residents and those of inland/rural residents, who have different expectations about the level of services that should be provided.

The public’s perception on the County overseeing the local OP policy updates have challenges (see notes).

Public equates outdated provisions/standards with looser, more flexible restrictions, and therefore resists policy, by-law, standards being updated to align with ‘good’ planning principles.

The “Why?” isn’t being presented to Council very well. **Opportunity:** want to do next step in addressing the ‘why’ in planning and get third party expert to host council workshop

Council appreciates service of County planners and values planning - value reports put forward. See planning as directing expansion, services, everything that enables municipalities will thrive

Public perception of planning relates to a lack of knowledge about planning, issues arise as public disagrees with planning in general, not Bruce County Planning specific

Orientation Session happens with every new council to overview planning process

Planning 101 Pamphlet good idea to implement for incoming public inquiries

Mixed council: have members who want to understand role of planner vs role of advisor, but overall council has good level of respect and takes planning staff recommendations

Struggle to understand the ‘Bruce lens’

The less mention of ‘the province requires this’ the better received by the public as don’t want province telling them what to do - want local respect

**Opportunity** for County policy to be general enough that allows local communities to focus on what they value and the unique themes that each local level faces (i.e. urban vs rural development).

Municipal Stakeholder Engagement Summary

	<p>Would like county to recognize which local municipalities have expertise in rural development vs urban centre development</p> <p>Public disgruntled about having to get a planning application at all, worse when additional studies needed etc. Usually when they have a conversation with local staff about why planning application is needed (that the planner didn't dream up requirement, is a provincial requirement etc.) they generally settle down.</p> <p>Planning 101 for public and council would be good - focus on the practical side of planning and local municipal specific planning concepts/processes</p> <p>Councils have a good understanding that planners are the professionals, heavily rely on planners' expertise and guidance (except for political topics like ZBL). They understand that the planner is following various provincial legislation and that it's not opinion based but is going by what they know is good planning (still sometimes take the opinion of 'customer is right')</p> <p>Rely heavily on the County to guide the County-perspective</p> <p>Most concern from the public stems from the need to complete studies and reports to justify their proposed development. Timing is not as much of an issue as the requirement to complete studies and the lack of guidance provided to them for completing such studies. It is recognized this varies based on the developers experience in submitting applications.</p> <p>Communication coming from the Planning Division sometimes is too complex for smaller landowner/developers (e.g. acronyms, long attachments, etc.). Improvements can be made to provide more guidance (e.g. the necessary contents of supporting studies/reports). "Helping people navigate" through the planning process was mentioned as an important need.</p> <p>Communication with Councils is lacking, compared with how it used to be. For instance, 10 years ago there was an afternoon workshop (optional) for Councilors to attend that explained the role of planning.</p> <p>From Public perspective, very complex system - multiple agencies involved, different timelines and fees and notice periods etc.</p> <p>Only new councilors get planning 101 session - last shuffle of council, only one new councilor so only one v one session</p> <p>Public put less value on County opinion as the County is further removed - value local staff opinion more, even if it's the same as county</p> <p>Public appreciates face to face discussion - office hours (monthly) work well</p>
Costs/Financial	<p>Challenge attracting tax base for some local municipalities</p>
Strengths	<p>Local DC's are used to pay for local planning studies and anything 'growth' related</p>
Weaknesses	<p>If model/system were to change and local planners were assigned to each local municipality, there would need to be consideration given to the financial implications as local municipalities may not have the resources and/or capacity to support a full-time planning position.</p>
Opportunities	
Threats	