



## Committee Report

**To:** Warden Janice Jackson  
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

**From:** Mark Paoli  
Director of Planning and Development

**Date:** August 12, 2021

**Re:** Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program Review

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### Staff Recommendation:

That the recommended directions in the Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program Review Report be endorsed.

### Background:

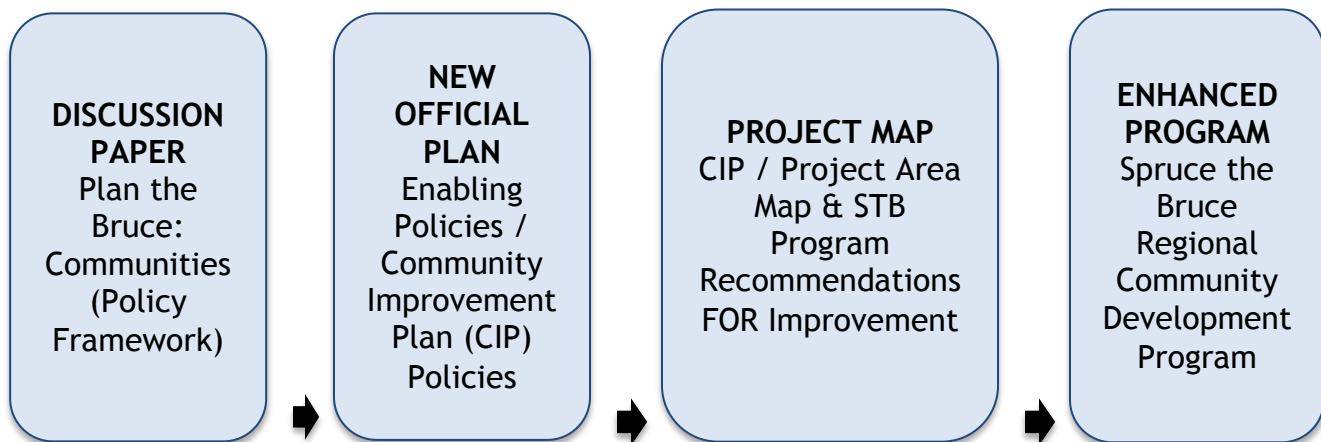
The Plan the Bruce: Communities Interim Report was completed and presented to the Planning and Development Committee on March 18, 2021. This report identified the recommendations for enabling healthy community development and supportive economic development policies in the new County Official Plan. It also provided a valuable base for a background review of the Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program.

The objectives for the Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program review are to:

- Support the priorities of the New Official Plan, with a direct link to the mandates identified in Guiding Principal Number 6 - to create wellbeing through access to complete and healthy communities.
- Address the needs identified through the Communities Discussion paper with the potential to include any applicable ideas from the other Plan the Bruce projects.
- Review the impact and reach of the current Community Development program (Spruce the Bruce) to reflect the above needs and priorities.
- Identify the type of financial incentives to support the above needs and priorities.
- Recommend how to provide those incentives.
- Investigate if there are any suggested non-financial incentives that should be included.
- Ensure that the potential to enhance the Spruce the Bruce program forms a regional approach to community development and is in line with the current Bruce County economic landscape.

The review of the Spruce the Bruce (STB) Community Development Program was completed in partnership with MDB Insight and that report is now complete (see attached).

The Connection between the Plan the Bruce ‘Communities’ Discussion Paper and the Enhanced Spruce the Bruce Program is illustrated below:



The STB Community Development Program Review Report provides the following:

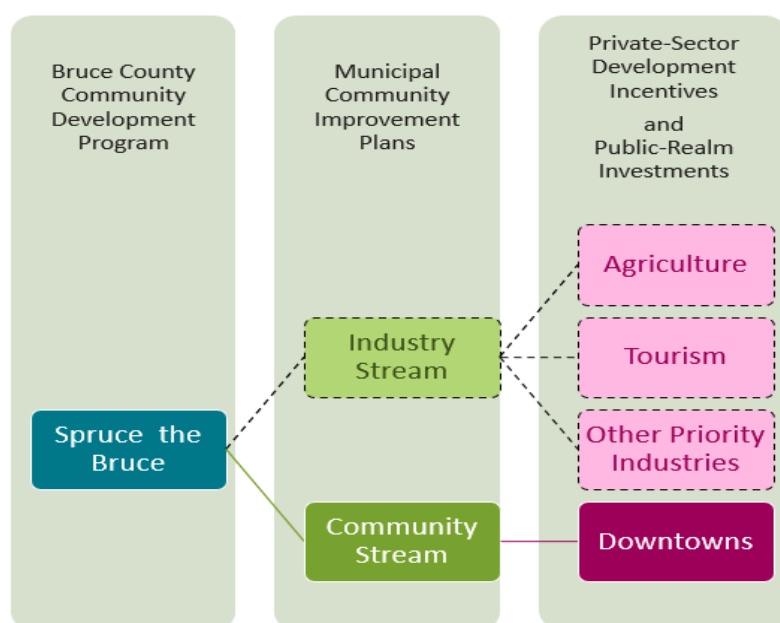
- A review and evaluation of the existing program, informed by an analysis of the communities in which the Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) operate and the success of the program to date;
- A discussion of economic development realities and theories of Community Development;
- A discussion of current trends and examples of other municipal Community Improvement Plans and programs;
- An overview of the legislative/policy requirements from the province for addressing communities in Official Plans; and,
- A review of the existing County Official Plan, and other relevant documents to identify discussion points for policy options for the County of Bruce.

Through this review, STB was identified as a leader in the industry in helping build attractive and welcoming communities. To grow and enhance STB, a series of recommendations were developed focused on the needs of the County in the current economic context, key themes from the Communities project, and the necessity for the County and its municipalities to demonstrate public-sector commitment to community improvement and in support of all industry sectors. The report suggests updating the County’s community improvement program in collaboration with its municipalities.

#### Industry and Community Streams:

To begin, two structural changes are identified to assist in repositioning the Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program for the future. They are as follows:

- **Industry Stream:** Adding an “Industry Stream” for agricultural, tourism and other priority industry sectors (e.g., energy, affordable housing) to the existing community-oriented stream focusing exclusively on downtown cores.
- **Community Stream:** Encouraging mindful and detailed collaboration between Bruce County and the municipalities to maximize the value of all programs supporting the public realm and the private sector, and to eliminate any confusion.



The diagram above shows how priority industry sectors can be supported through the addition of the industry and community streams.

### Community Development Program Review Report Recommendations:

The Spruce the Bruce Community Development Program Review report focuses on 6 topics with 27 recommended directions which are listed in the table below for convenience.

Topic	Recommended Direction: Gather Intelligence
<b>Action 1A:</b>	Activate a robust County-wide business outreach program, in collaboration with municipalities, that is personalized and targeted, aimed at gathering relevant and timely intelligence about proposed construction activity well in advance of the approvals, in order to facilitate expansions and investment plans.
<b>Action 1B:</b>	Set specific goals for outreach and engagement, particularly with top employers or high-growth sectors and influencers within key local industries, recording and reporting on levels of business satisfaction.

Topic	Recommended Direction: Modernize Policy
<b>Action 2A:</b>	Ensure that the healthy community vision and supportive planning policy frameworks are fully articulated in County and local Official Plans, including capacity to enlarge the scope of potential Community Improvement Plan incentives across geography and economic sectors, as well monitoring policies as an approach for measuring success.
<b>Action 2B:</b>	Ensure County and local Official Plans, Zoning By-laws, design standards or guidelines, and other policies and regulations are updated to facilitate innovative investment opportunities like temporary uses and pop-up activities, outdoor restaurant facilities, festivals, artisan studios, maker spaces, small-scale breweries and distilleries, farm experiences, monetized sustainable tourism experiences, and others desired mixes of uses and forms of development.

<b>Action 2C:</b>	Encourage municipalities to expand the geographic scope of their CIP by-laws to enable the disbursement of financial incentives outside downtown core areas, via Industry Streams into agricultural, lakeshore and recreation zones, including residential, retail and service commercial, restaurant, cultural, administrative land uses, as well as for intensified forms of mixed-use residential development.
<b>Action 2D:</b>	Support municipalities to update their Community Improvement Plan objectives, incentives, policies, and procedures, and encourage alignment of documentation and processes across the County.
<b>Action 2E:</b>	Encourage municipalities to change their local Zoning By-laws to permit additional uses as-of-right, to reduce the time and risk of the planning approvals process by limiting application review, processing, and public consultation processes, and to encourage uses associated with the ‘new economy’, (e.g., on-farm malting facilities, value-added meat production, agricultural experiences, protein processing, etc.).

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Recommended Direction: Expand Financial Incentives</b>
<b>Action 3A:</b>	Expand the Spruce the Bruce Community Improvement Program to create an “Industry Stream”, to include a deeper toolbox of incentives and instruments to support all communities outside of the program’s original mandate, such as new private-sector incentives targeted at diverse affordable housing types, brownfield remediation, on-farm experiences, tourist accommodation, breweries and distilleries, social enterprises, and selected industrial and commercial uses outside of downtown cores.
<b>Action 3B:</b>	Assist with funding the facilitation or development of rebranding initiatives for municipalities and communities, for updated community design toolkits.
<b>Action 3C:</b>	Develop criteria for priority projects and uses that benefit from waived or reduced application fees, development charges, or taxes to incentivize preferred types of development within target areas.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Recommended Direction: Double-down on Collaboration</b>
<b>Action 4A:</b>	Establish a Joint County/Municipal Community/Business Incentive Process Task Team with a short-term mandate to streamline the Community Improvement Plans and Spruce the Bruce program into a clear, easy-to-communicate joint initiative; communicate intelligence across municipal boundaries, and brainstorm on tactics acknowledging that not all communities are at the same stages of development; discuss program changes or enhancements; streamline program delivery and performance metrics; and define and measure and success. The Task Team would involve Bruce County and all municipalities (including Planning and Economic Development staff, and colleagues from other departments where appropriate) with the assistance of the Municipal Innovation Council.
<b>Action 4B:</b>	Continue to fund the Spruce the Bruce Community Improvement Program, linked with locally activated Community Improvement Plans, through the existing “Community Stream”.

<b>Action 4C:</b>	Identify and prioritize public realm improvements (streetscapes, parks, community facilities) within all the local downtowns and coordinate improvement opportunities with local municipalities.
<b>Action 4D:</b>	Continue to seek opportunities to partner with local stakeholders (BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, community organizations, local business operators, and property owners) to share the costs and responsibility for enhanced maintenance of the public realm, as well as other initiatives to activate and energize each individual community.
<b>Action 4E:</b>	Expand the Spruce the Bruce program by designating a share of the budget for businesses located within CIP boundaries in communities that have not completed the organizational capacity assessment phase.
<b>Action 4F:</b>	Develop a work plan to assist all communities successfully complete the organizational capacity assessment phase of the Spruce the Bruce program.
<b>Action 4G:</b>	Consider any municipality's wish to revisit branding and slogans to ensure community design toolkits resonate with residents, businesses, and community groups.
<b>Action 4H:</b>	Develop and implement a clear, results-oriented Investment Attraction Strategy for Bruce County, in collaboration with municipalities, outlining specific target sectors and geography, with tangible marketing tactics and performance metrics to measure outcomes.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Recommended Direction: Fix Bottlenecks</b>
<b>Action 5A:</b>	Run a regular series of tabletop exercises focused on identifying bottlenecks in the development process, involving all government agencies and departments: County, Municipalities, Planning, Engineering, Public Works, Conservation Authority, Building, utilities, and other agencies, to ensure the private sector is not at risk of encountering unexpected delays, and to align with Bruce County's LEAN continuous improvement culture. (Facilitated as part of Action 4A.)
<b>Action 5B:</b>	Revise policies and standards and remove or modify cumbersome definitions and criteria that result in cost barriers, wasted time, or inconvenience which would impede a developer's plans for appropriate redevelopment or reuse opportunities. (Facilitated as part of Action 4A.)
<b>Action 5C:</b>	Provide clear, simple, low-cost mechanisms (e.g., fee rebates, lowered or no fees, etc.) for accessing exceptions to obstacles for redevelopment or reuse opportunities that meet the healthy community development initiatives, where policies and standards may not be removed or modified. (Facilitated as part of Action 4A.)

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Recommended Direction: Communication and Measure</b>
<b>Action 6A:</b>	Undertake a survey each year of the businesses who received funding to understand and quantify how their business was positively impacted by the grant i.e. more foot traffic, higher sales, incorporating implementation and reporting into ongoing business outreach, and to better understand the economic impact of the grant program.
<b>Action 6B:</b>	Communicate successes and obstacles associated with Spruce the Bruce and the CIPs, as encountered by the private-sector development community, gathered through grant-recipient surveys or general business outreach, to facilitate improvements to programs, and prove their worth.

<b>Action 6C:</b>	Explore alternatives to the municipal report card system, with input from the municipalities.
<b>Action 6D:</b>	Report sources of funding for Spruce the Bruce, in terms of financial support by the County, by each of the municipalities, and by non-profit community groups, including metrics and evidence that directly attributes the aims of Spruce the Bruce programs to increases in the attraction of investment, settlement of newcomers or workforce participation; and modify reporting of the Spruce the Bruce program to separate funding of public-realm improvements from funding for incentives of private-property upgrades.
<b>Action 6E:</b>	Develop highly visual print and digital media tactics highlighting projects that have utilized Spruce the Bruce funding and include testimonials from business owners and other valuable information gathered in the annual survey of participating businesses.
<b>Action 6F:</b>	Review metrics, incorporate performance indicators into analysis, and recalibrate reporting efforts for Spruce the Bruce to ensure long-term political support for financial and human resources.

### Next Steps:

In the next few months, staff will:

- (1) Review the results from the Economic Development Strategic Plan Interim Report (Plan the Bruce: Business) which will be presented to Planning and Development Committee in Q3 2021;
- (2) Engage with Member municipal economic development colleagues to ensure alignment, in order to work together and build capacity to move these recommendations forward; and,
- (3) Review the feedback from the community engagement of the Plan the Bruce: Communities Report.

In summary, the Spruce the Bruce Program provided communities with resources to maintain and grow healthy commercial areas. It brought stakeholders together to create a vision for future growth and development providing tools and grant incentives to achieve that vision. After 10 years, the STB program has supported over 450 businesses and organizations.

It is now time to make changes to the program outlined in the report recommendations to meet the needs of current and future economic realities.

**Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:**

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

**Interdepartmental Consultation:**

None.

**Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:**

Plan the Bruce was identified as a major initiative and Council priority in the 2021 Planning and Development Business Plan.

**Report Author:**

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**Departmental Approval:**

Mark Paoli, Director  
Planning and Development

**Approved for Submission:**

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