



Plan the Bruce: **COMMUNITIES**

Discussion Paper

August 12, 2021



Page left intentionally blank

Contents

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 1 |
| 2 | Factors that Influence Healthy Communities..... | 1 |
| 3 | Key Topics and Trends Affecting Bruce County | 2 |
| 4 | Recommended Directions for Engagement | 3 |
| 5 | Community Engagement | 6 |
| 6 | What We Heard, Discussion, and Directions | 5 |
| 6.1 | A Healthy Community | 5 |
| 6.2 | A Complete Community..... | 15 |
| 6.3 | A Beautiful Community | 18 |
| 6.4 | A Viable Community..... | 24 |
| 6.5 | A Sustainable Community | 30 |
| 6.6 | A Resilient Community..... | 35 |
| 7 | Next Steps | 36 |

1 Introduction

Bruce County is embarking on a journey to a new County Official Plan.

This Discussion Paper for Plan the Bruce: Communities was prepared after community engagement and further analysis on recommended directions set out in the Plan the Bruce: Communities Interim Report. It is intended to provide a foundation for policy development in the County's new Official Plan.

We are grateful to the members of the community who provided feedback on this project. This input will help the County and local municipalities make informed planning decisions that support and nurture the happiness, health, and well-being of Bruce County residents.

2 Factors that Influence Healthy Communities



Built Environment



Sustainability +
Climate Change



Natural Environment
+ Open Space



Economic Resilience

Built Environment - The built environment must be designed to create opportunities for residents to be physically active, socially engaged, and have a high quality of life. The built environment must support a diverse mix of land uses, a range of housing types, high quality public open spaces, amenities and services, and access to a full range of mobility options.

Sustainability and Climate Change - Provincial policy directs planning authorities to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate by supporting energy conservation, efficient land use and development patterns, and embracing the use of *green infrastructure* and natural areas for water infiltration.

Natural Environment and Open Space - Growth in Bruce County must proceed in a sustainable manner to support not only the health of its residents, but the health of the environment in which they live.

Economic Resilience - The nature and structure of the economy is changing and key issues for economic resilience in the County are how to respond to an evolving economic context and how to accommodate a range and mix of job opportunities to create a healthy and livable community.

3 Key Topics and Trends Affecting Bruce County

Public health and land use planning are intrinsically linked, and there are several public health challenges related to the way in which we interact with our built and natural environments. The Communities Interim Report identified a number of key topics and trends as they relate to the health and well-being of residents in Bruce County. These topics and trends were influential in developing the recommended directions.

- Public health and chronic disease;
- Aging population;
- Varying contexts - broad range of towns, villages, and rural townships;
- Climate change
- Need for a full range of housing types and tenures;
- Mobility options;
- Access to services and amenities - recreation, health care, long-term care, education, retail and commercial, etc., parks and open spaces; and
- Access to healthy food.

4 Recommended Directions for Engagement

Applying a healthy community focus to the Official Plan Update encompasses several factors that work together to improve public health with the overall intent to promote complete communities, support social well-being, active residents, and a viable and beautiful place to live, work, learn, and play. The Plan the Bruce: Communities Interim Report set out a series of recommended directions to provide a base for public consultation. These directions focused on 6 areas:

- A Healthy Community;
- A Complete Community;
- A Viable Community;
- A Beautiful and High Quality Community;
- A Sustainable Community; and,
- A Resilient Community.

The Plan the Bruce: Communities Interim Report recommended directions are summarized below.

A Healthy Community

- Support an **active transportation system** that is highly integrated and connected within the community, the County, and broader region.
- Design the community around **pedestrian activity** with destinations including parks, cultural and community facilities, shopping, and restaurants within walking distance.
- Plan for "**age-in-place**" facilities that anticipate changing housing needs for an aging population.
- Support opportunities for a **sustainable local food system**.
- Strengthen the **role of public health** in collaborating with municipalities to promote the development of healthy communities.
- Support **accessibility for persons with disabilities** in all land-use planning and development decisions.
- Promote building and site design through **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** principles.

A Complete Community

- Recognize the importance of providing the opportunity for residents to remain in the community for their **entire lifetime** by accommodating a range and mix of housing types.
- Recognize the **importance of social interaction** and where services can be provided within easy walking and cycling distances to meet the needs of people of all ages, backgrounds, and capabilities.
- Ensure easy access for all residents **to a wide range of uses** including retail, parks and open spaces, employment opportunities, educational and cultural opportunities, mobility options, and diversity of housing types.
- Support **higher density built forms** and higher intensity land uses as a way of reducing land consumption and maximizing the efficiency and cost effectiveness of municipal service infrastructure.

A Beautiful Community

- Develop a **high-quality community** that encourages and supports active living, social engagement, civic pride, and the creation of a sense of place and well-being.
- Include **landmarks and gateways** that clearly identify where you are, and when you have entered.
- Build **beautiful streets** and streetscapes that accommodate all modes of transportation and are designed to be pedestrian friendly and safe.
- Ensure that **parks and open spaces**, as well as Bruce County's natural features, are beautiful, accessible, and linked.
- Require **high quality architecture** through a diversity of scale and style.

A Viable Community

- Continue to attract long-term economic development opportunities by protecting for and establishing opportunities for businesses and commercial activities.
- Continue the County's leadership role in attracting new economic drivers by **adapting to trend changes**.
- **Support** a full range of population-related employment options through the attraction of a diverse range of business sectors.
- Ensure that new development supports a full range of economical, safe, and accessible **mobility options**, including transit, when it becomes available.
- Ensure that development is **sustainable and financially viable** over its life cycle.

A Sustainable Community

- **Protect and enhance** local and regional ecosystems and biological diversity.
- Promote the **responsible use of resources** to ensure long-term sustainability, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce demands for energy, water, and waste systems.
- Demonstrate leadership in sustainable forms of **green building design and technology**, including the incorporation of renewable and alternative energy sources.
- Protect the **urban forest and the tree canopy** and identify objectives for how it can be enhanced and expanded.
- Support opportunities for **best management practices** for stormwater to protect against flooding and erosion while improving water quality.

A Resilient Community

- Explore opportunities in the Official Plan to support **Emergency Preparedness Planning** with respect to development, infrastructure, and systems. This can ensure basic needs are designed in a way that mitigates the impacts of climate change and related extreme weather events, such as flooding, heat waves, severe winter storms, and supply chain disruption.

5 Community Engagement

The community was asked to provide feedback on the recommended directions and offer further opinion or comments on healthy communities. The purpose of the engagement process was to engage a large, representative sample of Bruce County citizens to measure levels of support for the vision, the strategic recommended directions identified for the Communities Interim Report, and to gauge citizens' priorities amongst the draft recommended directions.



The engagement was approached in a variety of ways offering many opportunities for public input.



Virtual presentation to Council
March 18, 2021



Telephone survey conducted by MDB Insight
between May 27th to June 10th, 2021
485 interviews



Online Survey using Bang the Table, an
online engagement tool
124 responses



Social Media through the County website,
Facebook, and LinkedIn
26,810 impressions
7,173 views



Paper copies of the survey for written
comments

6 What We Heard, Discussion, and Directions

This section of the report summarizes the results from the engagement and includes recommended directions for Official Plan policies. Respondents showed a high level of support for making “Healthy Communities a Priority” in Bruce County. The following recommendations and policy suggestions may encompass components of the other Official Plan Discussion Papers but play an important role in the creation of healthy, *complete communities* and community well-being.

6.1 A Healthy Community

A healthy community consciously seeks to improve the health of its citizens by putting public health high on the social and political agenda. Physical, social, and mental well-being are the necessary components of public health, including access to healthy food, clean air and water, safe environments, and opportunities for physical activity. The built environment should be designed as a safe and welcoming setting to encourage residents to be physically active and socially engaged.

*Design an active transportation system that is accessible within and between communities and includes a mix of transportation options including walking, cycling, or using a wheelchair, and is connected to amenities like shopping, parks, **restaurants, and cultural / community facilities.***

What We Heard

There was a strong support for the design of an active transportation system that is accessible within and between communities, with a range and mix of transportation options like walking, cycling, or using a wheelchair and connection to amenities, including shopping, parks, restaurants, and cultural and community facilities. Of all survey respondents, 96% indicated their support for an active transportation system of this kind.

Some of the comments related to active transportation made note of the importance of having better and alternative transportation options in Bruce County, specifically those that can assist locals in commuting within and between municipalities. Some noted existing barriers to transportation in the County, specifically that automobile ownership is not realistic for many in the area, so transportation options are needed to allow residents to be mobile. Additionally, transportation needs were discussed among many respondents in regard to access to health and medical care. As many were noted to have trouble accessing health services in Bruce County, some suggested establishing a transportation program that would support individuals to access health and medical care.

Other respondents noted that the accessibility needs of those with physical limitations (e.g., use a mobility device like a wheelchair or walker) and the aging population is of utmost importance. Seniors and those with physical disabilities were noted to face barriers in moving around Bruce County due to a lack of accessible and appropriate infrastructure for their needs.

Comments from respondents also related to cycling infrastructure specifically - making sure that there are dedicated cycling (and walking) paths, as well as more interesting and attractive cycling routes.

Discussion

The availability and access to public services and amenities (recreation, health care, long-term care, education, retail and commercial, etc.) for residents of all incomes, ages, and abilities is important for maintaining a high quality of life and a sense of community and belonging, which is so valued in the County. The ease of access to these services and amenities is based on both their design and location. Compact, *complete communities* include a mix of uses near each other that enable people of all ages to access daily needs. A complete community provides a range of housing, services and amenities, transportation options, and employment opportunities. In Bruce County, the varying context of the eight municipalities includes different forms and shapes of urban and rural communities and must continue to be considered in the Official Plan.

Not everyone can drive or has access to a vehicle. Age, disability, choice, or affordability can all keep people from owning and operating a vehicle. Ensuring everyone has a safe, convenient, accessible way to get to where they need to go is an equity matter; everyone deserves access to health care, services, employment, education, etc. Clustering diverse land uses in neighbourhoods and communities will assist with ensuring the availability, accessibility, and convenience of destinations and facilities within walking or cycling distance.

Recommended Directions

- Informed by the “Bruce County Master Transportation Plan”, provide for a balanced transportation system that promotes *active transportation* facilities to encourage walking and cycling and other non-motorized forms of transportation. The County should require that all development contribute to the creation of walkable and connected communities with multiple destinations within walking distance of all residents and visitors.

- The Official Plan should direct new services and amenities to the County's downtowns and other community hubs, where they are easily accessible to a large percentage of residents by a range of transportation modes.
- Include policies to support sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use paths connecting to the street network and to community amenities to ensure that corridors between key destinations are fully accessible and support *active transportation* year-round.
- Planning for *public service facilities* should consider the ease of access by *active transportation*, the creation of mixed-use neighbourhood nodes, proximity to concentrations of residents, equitable access, and the contribution new facilities will make to the success and vitality of the County. Potential elements that may be considered for a strengthened policy framework may include upgrading and maintaining municipal services, *active transportation* facilities, public utilities, and social and recreational facilities so that they meet or exceed minimum standards and are inclusive and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.
- Although each municipality is unique, the County Official Plan must direct that *complete communities'* policies be applied consistently across all municipalities with the goal to support residents and provide equitable access to daily needs.

Anticipate changing needs due to an aging population.

What We Heard

Community respondents strongly favoured the development of age-in-place facilities, specifically those that anticipate changing housing needs for an aging population. Many survey respondents were seniors who noted in their comments their desire to remain in Bruce County as they continue aging. To ensure that remaining in the area is a viable option, many expressed the need to ensure that affordable housing is available and that jobs remain attainable to those who need or desire to continue working.

Many respondents of all ages noted their concern over the risk of losing the intergenerational presence that currently exists in Bruce County - i.e., the presence of families with multiple generations of living relatives and an overall demographic mix in the County. Survey respondents noted that they support the vision of the Plan for Bruce County; however, they also mentioned that planning for the future of Bruce County needs to be accessible to and inclusive of people from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds.

Discussion

Bruce County has an ageing population and will need to contend with this within its planning framework. Challenges relating to an aging population include ensuring that health and social systems are ready for this demographic shift, establishing policies and programs that support age friendly environments, expanding housing options and the need for long term care facilities, ensuring buildings are accessible, ensuring access to safe, convenient forms of transport to health care and services, and that health and community support services are available.

Responding to this demographic shift will require adaptations across many aspects of citizens' lives, such as how people work; how people care for, communicate, and interact with each other; how the built environment supports how people live and work, how public services are provided; and how mobility supports all age groups.

The County recognizes that the population is aging and with continued attraction of seniors to the County for retirement, there is the expectation that household size will decrease, leading to the need for townhouses and apartments. This creates the opportunity to expand and encourage a variety of housing options in the County. This form of housing is also attractive for non-family households and first-time home buyers.

Recommended Directions

- Considering changing demographics, it is important to ensure that there are sufficient housing options appropriate for and geared to seniors. The Official Plan policies should consider directing retirement and long-term care facilities closer to the downtowns of the urban areas to be close to services and amenities, and incorporate multi-storey, higher density buildings to achieve sufficient yields on small sites.
- Providing for universally accessible housing options will play an important role in enabling the widest spectrum of residents, regardless of age or ability, to live within the community. Special needs housing, including supportive housing and accessible affordable housing, should also be prioritized, to accommodate residents of varying or developing needs. Special needs housing should be located in proximity to a range of services and amenities to ensure access to daily needs.

Support opportunities for sustainable local food systems such as local farmers markets, agri-tourism, Community Shared Agriculture programs, and urban agriculture.

What We Heard

When asked about supporting opportunities for sustainable local food systems, such as local farmers' markets, agri-tourism, Community Shared Agricultural programs, and urban agriculture, 98% of respondents supported these strategies. Some respondents commented that a focus on healthy communities and access to sustainable food sources is important and necessary. With this, there was mention of the need to create access to affordable local produce and healthy food year-round. Some expressed concerns over the health and wellbeing of the population, noting that access to healthy food can ensure that all members of the community are, in turn, healthy.

Many respondents commented on the need to emphasize more on the protection of agricultural land in Bruce County, and the rural community more broadly. There is a desire from many to maintain and preserve farmland, as well as incorporate regenerative farming practices, rather than prioritize the strategies and goals of the project on other aspects like tourism and housing development on viable farmland - i.e., ensuring the maintenance of agricultural land for agricultural purposes. Some respondents noted in their comments that they fear population growth, development and urbanization will lead to the loss of farmland in Bruce County.

Respondents mentioned that a focus on healthy communities and access to sustainable food sources is important and necessary; especially ensuring that healthy and local food can be accessed year-round.

A presentation of the Communities Interim Report recommendations was given to the Poverty Task Force on June 25th, 2021. The discussion and comments received in response to access to healthy food was the distance travelling within towns can be a challenge, noting the location of the Port Elgin grocery stores as an example. Further, the term "Food Desert" was used for rural areas with food not always accessible.

Discussion

According to the Canadian Community Health Survey by Statistics Canada, 2017-2018, 1 in 8 households or 4.4 million people in Canada, were food insecure in 2018, where inadequate or insecure access to food is due to financial constraints. At a local scale, the Grey Bruce Public Health Unit notes that 20% of households in Grey Bruce are food insecure.

Bruce County has a strong historic, cultural, and economic identity related to agriculture and agriculture is expected to continue to play an important role in the County's rural economy and lifestyle. Access to healthy food is essential to a healthy community and continuing to promote the expansion of the agricultural industry will benefit local food production and assist with ensuring the economic viability of farming.

While the County has a viable farming community, access to healthy food is often difficult. The term Food Desert refers to an area where residents access to nutritious food options is restricted due to the absence of grocery stores within a convenient traveling distance. Residents living in the rural areas of Bruce County are dependent on vehicles to access grocery stores located in the Towns or villages. Often, the grocery stores are only located within the larger Towns, further limiting access.

Recommended Directions

- Through the Official Plan, support opportunities for a sustainable local food system that may include local farmers markets, agri-tourism, Community Shared Agriculture programs (CSAs), food cooperatives, diversity of agricultural uses (greenhouses, orchards), and community gardens. Encourage community gardens near multi-residential housing and special needs housing, either on public or private land.
- Consider adding a healthy food system as an objective in the Official Plan.
- Support urban agriculture as part of a community's character and open space system, while also providing a transitional use between the natural and built environments, and traditional farm areas at community peripheries.
- Through the Official Plan, development plans and building designs should provide opportunities for local food growing and production through:
 - Community gardens;
 - Edible landscapes;
 - Small scale food processing;
 - Food-related home occupations/industries;
 - Small- and medium-scale food retailers; and,
 - Local market space (i.e., a farmer's market).

Strengthen the role of Public Health in collaborating with municipalities to promote a healthy community.

What We Heard

There was strong support in strengthening the role of Public Health in collaborating with municipalities to promote a healthy community, with 97% of respondents indicating their support. In their comments, survey respondents noted many aspects of health, specifically, environmental sustainability and its impact on health; as well as access to health and medical care, healthy and local food, and other factors that contribute to good mental and physical health.

It was noted by some respondents that ensuring the protection of natural areas will help maintain healthy communities, specifically as we experience climate change. Making greater efforts to protect natural areas by ensuring that they are clean and well maintained was also noted as important. With this, many survey respondents commented on the proposed geological repository of nuclear waste and their concerns over the impact that the repository may have on the environment, as well as the health and wellbeing of locals.

A large emphasis was placed on accessing health and medical care in the comments provided by respondents, specifically noting that many individuals experience difficulties accessing doctors, hospitals, and other medical and health care services. In conjunction with this, some noted that transportation programs to aid in accessing care and services within Bruce County could be a helpful solution to the barriers faced by many in the area. Respondents mentioned the need to focus on ways to improve and maintain health, including mental health. To better the mental health of those in Bruce County, some suggested creating more opportunities for social interaction, intergenerational exchange, and creating and improving existing public spaces and natural areas that will attract more users.

Discussion

A number of Public Health Units in Ontario and across Canada have prepared documents to support Official Plan policy language and the inclusion of public health in policy documents. Their intent is to assist with influencing land use planning decisions and shaping how communities are developed to impart a positive impact on the physical and mental health of its residents. The recommendations from these reports are organized under the categories of neighbourhood or community design; transportation; natural environment; food systems; and housing. The Public Health Unit should be approached about the potential for their review and evaluate land use policies and applications through a public health lens to provide considerations that can be implemented to encourage the development of healthy communities.

Applying a health and well-being lens as a focal point of community design and land use planning should be a key theme for the Official Plan. The built environment and how it is designed has a major influence on resident's health.

Recommended Directions

- Approach the Public Health Unit about the potential to collaborate on development of: supporting criteria for when public health is circulated on planning documents; and, a policy in the Official Plan that would encourage developers use the Grey Bruce Healthy Development Checklist as part of the development application process.
- Through the Official Plan, ensure that the healthy community vision and supportive planning policy frameworks are fully articulated in local Official Plans and local Zoning By-laws, including an approach for measuring success.

Support accessibility for persons with disabilities in all land-use planning and development decisions.

What We Heard

Supporting accessibility for persons with disabilities in all land use planning and development decisions was one of the most supported strategies, with 98% of survey respondents noting their support. In the comments, respondents identified the need for more services and amenities that caters to the needs of specifically seniors and those with physical limitations (e.g., those who use mobility devices like wheelchairs or walkers). Accessibility was discussed in terms of ensuring the activities, transportation, and public spaces are accessible and inclusive of individuals of all ages and abilities. Additionally, many noted the importance of economic accessibility - i.e., ensuring that the accessibility features and amenities that are provided are also economically accessible to individuals of all economic and social classes.

Discussion

The County must support accessibility for persons with disabilities in all land-use planning and development decisions to enable the County to fulfill its duty to accommodate persons with disabilities.

Recommended Directions

- Through the Official Plan, introduce policies that implement Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

- Providing for universally accessible housing options will play an important role in enabling the widest spectrum of residents, regardless of age or ability, to live within the community. Housing for people with special needs, including supportive housing and accessible affordable housing, should also be prioritized, to accommodate residents of varying or developing needs. This housing should be close to the services and amenities that meet daily needs.

Promote building and site designs that assist in the reduction of crime.

What We Heard

A majority (94%) of respondents noted their support for promoting building and site design that assists in the reduction of crime through the implementation of *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design* (CPTED) principles. A few respondents noted that crime reduction initiatives are desired in Bruce County, and, relatedly, some also mentioned that increased police protection is also desired. Despite this, some respondents indicated that funding should be prioritized for other needs.

Discussion

The municipalities of Bruce County and Grey County have prepared a Community and Safety Well-being Plan (CSWBP). The goal of the Plan is to achieve sustainable communities where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, and where residents can meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression, ultimately leading to a reduction in crime.¹ Five priority areas were identified: Addictions/Substance Use; Mental Health; Crime Prevention; Housing and Homelessness; and Poverty and Income.

The intent of the recommendation is to ensure that buildings, public spaces, and parks are safe.

¹<https://brucecounty.on.ca/sites/default/files/CSWBP%20Municipalities%20of%20Bruce%20and%20Grey%20-%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf>

Recommended Directions

- Introduce policies that specifically encourage the design and development of safe neighbourhoods, site design, and buildings that assists in the reduction of the incidence of crime through policies and principles associated with *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design* (CPTED).
- Through the Official Plan, develop policies to support appropriate infrastructure to promote safe walking and cycling. Incorporating principles associated with accessibility (inclusive, universal design) and age-friendly community planning.

6.2 A Complete Community

A complete community meets people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime by providing convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing, including *affordable housing*, public services and community infrastructure including educational and recreational facilities.

Offer a mix of housing types and options for all life stages.

What We Heard

Respondents indicated their desire for a greater mix of housing types and options for all life stages, with 96% supporting this strategy. From their comments, respondents primarily noted the need for greater diversity in housing tenure, specifically noting the urgent need for affordable housing as costs have increased in Bruce County over time. There was some concern over gentrification in Bruce County as many new residents establish themselves and their families in the area. Respondents noted that ensuring housing is available for the aging population, and broadly for all current residents of the County, to have the option to remain in the community for their entire lifetime. Housing for young people was also expressed as important, to create opportunities for young people to remain in the area and not get priced out over time.

Several Municipalities already have policies that permit additional residential uses, though perhaps not to the full extent directed through the Planning Act, and with some specific consideration of their servicing and lot area circumstances. One Municipality requested consideration of opportunities to maintain local approaches to additional residential units in the Official Plan.

The County recently passed an Amendment to the County Official Plan that implements one of the recommended directions of the Homes Discussion Paper and incorporates much of the above feedback. The Amendment updated, with the effect of increasing flexibility in, the policies authorizing additional residential units.

Discussion

Bruce County is dealing with market forces that are geared towards ground-oriented housing with limited market demand for higher density residential. An increased focus on growth within the County provides the opportunity to explore a variety of residential density options to utilize land more efficiently, reduce the cost of municipal services, and provide *affordable housing* options.

By providing a full range of housing types and tenures, the County will aim to meet the housing needs of all current and future residents throughout their lives, irrespective of income, ability, or lifestyle. This mix and diversity make it possible for households to move within one community as housing needs and lifestyle preferences change. This also improves their ability to afford other basic needs such as health care and nutritious food, while decreasing stress.

Recommended Directions

- Informed by the “Homes” Discussion Paper prioritize a variety of housing forms and mixed income housing developments to increase access to local, affordable, and diverse housing options, which helps people stay in their communities longer.
- Encourage local municipalities to develop policies that provide incentives to develop affordable housing in their downtown areas. The County should consider establishing a new County Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for housing to address the supply of affordable housing and to encourage housing development in downtowns.
- Ensure that the County policies direct local Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to facilitate the desired mix of uses and forms of development. The County and its local municipalities must focus on facilitation, rather than a highly restrictive/regulatory approach. This means more flexibility in policies and procedures so long as the collective healthy community development vision is achieved.

*Create public spaces designed to **promote social interaction inclusive of community members from all life stages and backgrounds.***

What We Heard

There was strong support from respondents (96%) for creating public spaces that are designed to promote social interaction and are inclusive of community members from all walks of life and of diverse backgrounds. Respondents commented on the need to expand public spaces and outdoor activity spaces; increase the maintenance of downtowns and their public spaces; as well as provide more opportunities for intergenerational exchange by diversifying the target population for public spaces to ensure that there can be social exchange between varying demographic groups. Securing more public spaces and ensuring their upkeep and maintenance were noted to be of utmost importance to ensure the health and wellbeing of the community.

Discussion

A successful and complete community consciously seeks to improve the health of its citizens by putting public health high on the social and political agenda. Physical, social, and mental well-being are the necessary components of public health. To ensure that these components are achieved, the built environment must be designed to create opportunities for residents to be physically active and socially engaged. To meet the needs of people of all ages, backgrounds, and capabilities throughout the various stages of their lives, it is essential to provide opportunities for social interaction and locate commercial and community services within easy walking and cycling distances.

All residents should have access to parks and open spaces, and this should be a key planning principle. Opportunities to engage with nature have physical, mental, and social health benefits and should be available through trail systems, a variety of parks and open spaces such as municipal parks, community parks, neighbourhood parks, parkettes, sports fields, community gardens, and rooftop gardens, as well as access to the natural environment.

Parks and open spaces have many benefits such as providing for a healthier urban ecosystem through improved air quality and the reduction of heat islands. As communities become more compact with higher density forms of housing it is critical to ensure a diversity of accessible park spaces are available for residents to provide areas for both active and passive recreation.

Recommended Directions

- Through the Official Plan, it will be important to ensure that the policy framework supports an appropriate parks and open space network, which considers the current needs of residents in addition to future needs as the County continues to grow and evolve. This may include consideration of more urban park typologies.
- Consider policies for new development that ensures residents are generally within 400 to 800 metres of a component of the parks and open space system and/or a publicly accessible component of the natural heritage system.
- Public space/event space should be prioritized in the downtowns, as well as near schools, senior's centres, workplaces, and higher density residential developments.

6.3 A Beautiful Community

A high quality and ultimately a beautiful community includes well designed buildings and *streetscapes*. A beautiful community protects natural heritage features and viewsapes and includes an accessible and well-designed system of public parks and open spaces that celebrate the community and provide opportunities for enjoyment by the entire population.

Highlight and develop local landmarks and entry points in an effort to improve navigation and site recognition throughout the community.

What We Heard

There was support for highlighting and developing local landmarks and entry points in an effort to improve navigation and site recognition throughout the community, with 90% of respondents supporting this initiative. Comments from respondents did not focus on the development of landmarks, however, many noted their support in bringing people into Bruce County - whether as new residents or through tourism initiatives. Some residents noted their reluctance to accept newcomers into the community, as they perceived growth and development in Bruce County as undesirable.

Discussion

A high-quality community includes destinations, landmarks, and gateways that distinguish it within its context and establish a sense of place. Crucial to a high-quality community is the attention to the interplay among built form, the *public realm*, and the natural environment. A high-quality community should engender a sense of pride as a place to live and a sense of stewardship in its long-term care and maintenance.

Recommended Directions

- Develop a high-quality community that encourages and supports active living, social engagement, civic pride, and the creation of a sense of place and well-being. Celebrate views over the water and public access to the water's edge. Opportunities for public access points will ensure the protection of the existing natural features and recognize any hazards along the water's edge.
- Include landmarks and gateways that clearly identify where you are, and when you have entered. Landmarks must be recognizable and visible from a distance. Gateways help recognize entry points into the community. Landmarks and gateways can include buildings, structural elements, and/or landscape features.

- Support the integration of arts, cultural, and recreational facilities with local business, health and social services, schools, parks, and civic buildings.

Develop beautiful streets and streetscapes to enhance the character of the community.

What We Heard

Most respondents (92%) supported the development of beautiful streets and streetscapes to enhance the character of the community. Respondents commented on the fact that change is happening quite rapidly in Bruce County and there needs to be a level of maintenance to the character of the community, specifically as it was noted that character is what brings people to Bruce County. Some respondents see improvements to Bruce County as necessary and this may be an opportunity to redefine the area and take the necessary steps to improve the quality of life of all residents, this includes enhanced the public realm to ensure it enhances the character of the community and reflects the needs and desires of locals.

Discussion

The *public right-of-way* makes up a significant portion of the *public realm* and therefore plays an important role in community design, creating a pleasing environment and establishing a distinctive character. Addressing factors such as high quality streetscaping, appropriate streets cross-sections/widths for different contexts, ensuring well designed facilities for all modes of travel, incorporating green elements, and creating opportunities for public art can all have a positive impact on spending time in and moving through Bruce County's towns and villages and encouraging *active transportation*.

Recommended Directions

- Consider an Official Plan policy that supports County-wide urban design guidelines to provide direction and greater clarity for upcoming development in areas that are favourable for new development or intensification. Urban design guidelines will protect and reinforce the County's built characteristics and shape the public and private realms, including streets, public spaces, and buildings to achieve the vision of the Official Plan. The guidelines are to be read in conjunction with and complement the objectives and policies of the Official Plan.
- Through the Official Plan, strengthen the policy framework for the public realm and streetscapes.

Ensure parks, open spaces, waterfronts, and natural features are beautiful, accessible, and connected.

What We Heard

Ensuring that parks, open spaces, waterfronts, and natural features are beautiful, accessible, and connected was one of the main points of discussion among the respondents, and 96% of survey respondents supported this strategy. In their comments, respondents noted the importance of creating an action plan that will protect and enhance natural beauty and environmental features in the area. Respondents commented on the fact that an enhanced community environment results in an improved quality of life and mental health, as well as protecting natural areas helps fight climate change. Ensuring that all locals can access parks, open spaces, waterfronts, and natural features by considering the needs of individuals of all ages, abilities and diverse backgrounds was noted as greatly important. With regards to the waterfront, some respondents commented on the need to ensure that the waterfront remains publicly accessible.

Protecting and enhancing natural features was the most commonly brought up concern among respondents. Many supported the strategies proposed due to their level of environmental consciousness, however, other concerns were brought up such as the deforestation caused by potential development opportunities, the effects of human interference with natural land, the proposed geological repository of nuclear waste, ongoing lakeshore erosion, coastline fragmentation, rising lake levels and the buildup of plastics in natural areas. Relatedly, some commented on their concerns over tourism in the area and the effects that seasonal visitors have on the natural areas and environment in Bruce County, specifically the overuse of beaches and other spaces not designed to accommodate the amount of people who visit.

A presentation of the Communities Interim Report recommendations was given to the Poverty Task Force on June 25th, 2021. The discussion and comments received in response to the recommendation noted the need for creating more gardens, trees, and green space for residential and downtown areas.

Discussion

The natural environment, urban forest, and the open space system are essential components of a healthy, sustainable community. Firstly, the preservation and enhancement of the *natural heritage system* ensures the health of the environment and supports the recreational and cultural opportunities in the County. Secondly, ensuring residents have convenient access to a connected and diverse range of open spaces, parks, and recreation facilities offers opportunities for improved public health and exercise.

Access to parks, open spaces, and nature has physical, social, and mental health benefits. Exposure to the natural environment can alleviate stress, increase physical activity, and improve social interaction and mental health. Opportunities for residents to engage with nature should be provided in every land use area, supported by trails, linear parks, and sidewalks, creating connections between parks, the waterfront, and green spaces.

Recommended Directions

- Parks and open spaces should be designed to achieve outcomes such as the following, where possible and appropriate to the context:
 - Accessible and visible from the street network with substantial street frontage;
 - Reduced water demand through native, water efficient, drought resistant planting;
 - Relief from sun with areas for shade;
 - Reduced runoff by using through permeable materials for hard surface materials,
 - Visual and physical means of access to recreational areas, open space, parks, and other similar public uses; and,
 - Adequate parking with parking access points designed so that they minimize the danger of vehicular/pedestrian conflict.
- Policies should be provided to ensure that parks and open spaces, including the existing natural features, are beautiful, accessible, and linked. Parks and open spaces need to be visible and accessible from, and integrated with, the street system, and include a full array of opportunities for outdoor festivals, recreation, and play, as well as quiet contemplation. High quality landscape architecture will ensure that these outdoor spaces include public art and appropriate grading, paving, and planting materials that celebrate the landscape context.
- Connectivity should occur beyond the scale of roads and must consider how pedestrians connect to parks, the waterfront, and visit natural systems, and do so safely and in a comfortable manner. Policies for new development must play a role in ensuring a high degree of connectivity by enhancing circulation systems and creating clear routes. A connected system must also be legible. A legible environment should be easy to navigate, safe, and create opportunities for public interaction.

Require diverse and high-quality architecture through the use of themes, building materials, colour, and architectural details.

What We Heard

Most respondents (80%) expressed their support for requiring diverse and high-quality architecture through the use of themes, building materials, colour and architectural detail. Some commented on their desire to see natural, historic and signature architecture design standards in all new and existing buildings. Relatedly, a few respondents noted their desire to see more discussion on heritage building protection and preservation, with specific mention of buildings with cultural heritage value.

Discussion

Bruce County includes historic main street areas and neighbourhoods. These main streets and neighbourhoods are reflective of the character of the area and include historical and architectural qualities. Although Bruce County will see growth over the next 30 years, Bruce County is committed to protecting its small-town charm and rural character. It is important to continue to support and enhance the historic character of main streets and neighbourhoods and their built heritage, which critical to placemaking. At the same time, it is important to also explore how to incorporate new development which complements and is compatible with the existing buildings, without attempting to imitate their heritage attributes.

The concept of compatibility is an important issue. New development should integrate with the existing context and consider: high quality design; sensitivity to heritage (built and natural); appropriate transitions to stable neighbourhoods; the character of neighbourhoods and community identity; and fit within the overall vision for the County

Recommended Directions

- Require high quality architecture that transcends a theme or a specific period in time. Buildings should be compatible with one another, but there must be a diversity of scale and a diversity of style as it may be defined through building materials, colour, and architectural details.

- Through the Official Plan, new policies could support architectural guidelines for new development, which could address elements such as building design, design for priority/high visibility locations, and architectural standards and distinct elements of local communities.
- Establish a clear policy framework for the design issues related to infill and redevelopment in order to ensure compatible development adjacent to existing neighbourhoods.
- Together with the 'Culture' discussion paper, develop supportive policies for adaptive reuse of older buildings.

6.4 A Viable Community

A viable community has a strong economy that is market responsive, efficient, and cost effective.

Protect and support current businesses and commercial activities while attracting long-term economic development opportunities.

What We Heard

There was strong support for protecting and supporting existing businesses and commercial activities, while attracting long-term economic development opportunities in Bruce County, with 95% of survey respondents indicating their support. Some of the comments from respondents noted that help is needed to attract more people and business to the area. More businesses and industries are encouraged to come to Bruce County as it will help secure jobs for the existing and future population. Some noted an opportunity to attract tech-based industries, manufacturing, and education to the County. They also noted a desire for less seasonal businesses (i.e., summer-focused) and yearly businesses and opportunities that would help bring in people and cater to the needs of locals at all points throughout the year, as well as ensuring that post-COVID tourism is not the primary focus of economic development and population growth in the County. Respondents noted that attracting businesses to communities in Bruce County will ensure support for residents, as they will not need to access services out of town.

Despite the fact that there was general support for attracting new business into Bruce County, concerns were expressed regarding the future of existing businesses. Some respondents noted that there are limited employees for current businesses in the area, so some respondents questioned how bringing in new business would impact the existing businesses that have, and may continue to, struggle with securing employees.

Discussion

The employment landscape in smaller Ontario communities is shifting, with the introduction of more diverse demographics. This changing context will require economic development policies to focus both on protecting key employment lands for future employment growth and adapting to the 'new economy', Where settlement areas are home to a broader mix of compatible uses. It is important for Bruce County to grow its employment base in concert with residential growth - to promote a complete community, to provide jobs for residents, and to ensure a healthy and diversified tax base.

Commercial development is a fundamental part of a complete community. Retail and service commercial uses, accommodations, and restaurants create agglomerations of activity that are both highly utilized by businesses and residents and cherished as social centres. These facilities are important in establishing the character of the County. Planning for these uses is an important municipal activity because there is a strong desire to ensure the maximum commercial opportunity and choice for residents, businesses, and tourists, while attempting to manage those opportunities to ensure healthy competition.

Recommended Directions

- Continue to attract long-term economic development opportunities by protecting for and establishing opportunities for businesses and commercial activities.
- Ensure Official Plan policies support Community Improvement Plans (CIP's). The preparation of a Community Improvement Plan must be consistent with applicable provincial, upper-tier, and local policy. Section 28 of the Planning Act requires that municipalities must have provisions within the Official Plan relating to community improvement, in order to designate a Community Improvement Project Area by By-law and prepare and adopt a Community Improvement Plan.
- The retail and service commercial sector will be supported by promoting compact built form and intensification (more, and higher density residential growth) in, and around the existing downtowns, encouraging the integration of those uses with other land uses (educational, cultural, recreational, and administrative) to support the achievement of complete communities in a logical pattern of development within the County.

Maintain the County's leadership role in adapting to economic change, maintaining employment options, and attracting new businesses/investments to the area.

What We Heard

Similar to supporting existing businesses and attracting long-term economic development, there was a strong support for maintaining the County's leadership role in adapting to economic change, maintaining employment options, and attracting new businesses and investment into the area, with 94% of survey respondents favouring this strategy. As mentioned previously, some of the comments from respondents noted that help is needed to attract more people and business to the area. More businesses and industries are encouraged to come to Bruce County as it will help secure jobs for the existing and future population. Some noted an opportunity to attract tech-based industries, manufacturing, and

education to the County, and they also noted that up-front investment in infrastructure may be necessary to attract some of these new industries.

Respondents noted the need for sustainable economic development to ensure that Bruce County is an inclusive place that does not leave any of its current residents behind as it grows, develops, and evolves.

Discussion

It is critical to protect an appropriate supply and range of commercial and employment lands to support ongoing economic development, a diversified tax base, and *complete communities* where residents have access to jobs, goods, and services. Beyond traditional employers, Bruce County should explore strategies for supporting and attracting the businesses of the ‘ever evolving (new) economy’, through the provision of business incubators, flexible/shared workspace, start-up supports, and support for home occupations.

There is an opportunity to encourage and attract a more diverse range of employment opportunities, which may contribute to a higher percentage of residents who can both live and work in the County. Rather than the targeted focus on employment lands, the County should leverage its unique character and high quality of life to promote a broader choice of appropriate employment locations, including the downtowns. This will help the County move towards a more diverse economy that can respond to a changing economic environment.

Recommended Directions

- Ensure County Official Plan 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 other desired mixes of uses and forms of development.
- Commercial/mixed use areas must be able to continue to support the needs of all residents and provide opportunities for community-based employment. The policy framework should clearly define appropriate uses for various commercial/mixed use areas and ensure there are strong links between residents and the commercial areas.
- Official Plan policies should encourage more intensive retail development or direct growth to underutilized commercial parcels with space for additional infill development. The opportunity for more mixed-use development

(retail and service commercial at-grade, with residential above) has the potential to achieve live work objectives in key locations throughout the County.

- The County should place a stronger emphasis on intensification, alternative modes of transportation, urban design, a high-quality public realm and linkages to adjacent lands in the planning of commercial, mixed use and employment lands, where appropriate.

Ensure a wide range of mobility/transportation options that are economical, safe, and accessible.

What We Heard

Ensuring a wide range of mobility and transportation options that are economical, safe, and accessible was another popular strategy among respondents, with 96% of survey respondents indicating their support for this strategy. Many respondents noted the urgent need for transportation and mobility options that cater to, specifically, the aging population and those with physical limitations. Accessibility barriers are present in Bruce County, and respondents noted that the existing accessibility features need be improved, and new efforts need to be made to ensure that the development of Bruce County is inclusive of individuals of all ages, abilities, and diverse backgrounds.

Some respondents noted that better transportation options need to be in place that allow for intra-county travel, as well as better transportation options to access health and medical care and services. Some also noted the need to provide better connective networks between Bruce County and major cities nearby - specifically, Toronto, London and Kitchener-Waterloo were mentioned.

Within Bruce County, it was also noted by respondents that there is a need for more crosswalks, signage, road improvements and traffic control. Furthermore, respondents noted their desire for the regular upkeep and maintenance of the infrastructure.

A presentation of the Communities Interim Report recommendations was given to the Poverty Task Force on June 25th, 2021. The comments received noted that the further expansion of Grey Transit Route is needed to connect rural areas with town and village areas, as moving around the county can be a challenge; and to encourage scheduling that aligns with the work day.

Discussion

There is the opportunity to support a full spectrum of mobility options for all residents and improved connectivity within a fully integrated network. This is an essential element of planning for sustainable transportation methods and healthier lifestyles. Providing enhanced mobility for people of all ages means understanding opportunities to make any type of street a “*complete street*”. *Complete streets* provide pleasing pedestrian experiences, improved safety for cyclists and enhanced opportunities for *active transportation*, all while ensuring the efficient movement of goods, transit, and passenger vehicles within a balanced right-of-way.

With respect to creating a more adaptive and sustainable transportation system, the County could also explore innovations in the electrification of the private and public auto fleet and the expansion of charging stations. The County is currently undertaking a Master Transportation Plan Study which will analyze the current and future needs of the County’s transportation system.

Recommended Directions

- Consider a complete streets approach to meet the needs of road users of all ages and abilities. This would include the development of a complete streets policy and supporting design guidelines for new streets such as design, construction, operations, and maintenance activities and products on the public road network. The policy would also apply to the refurbishment and reconstruction of all existing Arterial, Collector, and Local Roads to accommodate the needs and safety of all road users.
- Informed by the “Connecting” Discussion Paper, support an active transportation system that is highly integrated and connected within the community, the adjacent communities, the County, and to transportation systems that serve the broader region.
- Informed by the “Connecting” Discussion Paper, ensure that new development supports a full range of economical, safe, and accessible mobility options, including transit, when it becomes available.
- In considering the impacts of a changing climate the County should consider prioritizing a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system and mobility strategy involving reduction in auto use and the promotion of transit/shuttles, rideshare, and active transportation.

Ensure that development is economically sustainable and financially viable.

What We Heard

Of all survey respondents, 94% indicated their support for ensuring that development is economically sustainable and financially viable. Many respondents noted their desire to see development that considers the need of individuals of diverse backgrounds and from all walks of life. Specifically, respondents noted that, as development occurs, they do not want to see the existing population be priced out or displaced if the County becomes increasingly unaffordable. A few respondents made note of the fact that to ensure that development is sustainable; the needs of all people in Bruce County need to be considered.

Discussion

The appropriate supply and quality of servicing is integral to the management of growth, conservation of resources, and quality of life. In particular, the integration of servicing and infrastructure policies with land use planning is necessary to ensure logical and efficient development. Well located public services and amenities will further support the vitality of the community and the efficient use of infrastructure.

Recommended Directions

- Through the Official Plan, develop policies to optimize the use of existing infrastructure investments and to promote the coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective delivery of service infrastructure and community infrastructure, including fast and affordable broadband connectivity.
- The Official Plan should acknowledge and plan for the impacts of a changing climate on the County's servicing and transportation infrastructure.
- Informed by the "Good Growth" Discussion Paper, support higher density-built forms and higher intensity land uses as a way of reducing land consumption and maximizing the efficiency and cost effectiveness of municipal service infrastructure.

6.5 A Sustainable Community

Sustainability is commonly referred to as activities that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The County may consider developing an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan to create a long-term plan that provides direction for the community to achieve environmental, cultural, social, and economic sustainability goals.

Promote responsible use of resources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, demands for energy, water, and waste systems.

What We Heard

Many respondents noted their support for promoting the responsible use of resources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, demands for energy, water, and waste systems. Climate change and the impacts that mismanaging environmental and natural resources has on it was a major topic of discussion among respondents. There is an overall support for the strategies set out in this project; however, there was still concern over how to ensure a climate future when some environmental considerations were missed in the strategies. For example, respondents made mention of concerns such as the deforestation caused by potential development opportunities, the effects of human interference with natural land, the geological repository of nuclear waste, ongoing lakeshore erosion, coastline fragmentation, rising lake levels and the buildup of plastics in natural areas.

Furthermore, some residents noted their support for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, however, they also noted that they would like to see more, and a greater variety of, actionable strategies. Ensuring a safe and healthy future for all individuals in Bruce County was important to many respondents.

Discussion

A sustainable community is environmentally and socially healthy and resilient. It meets the challenges of climate change, and other environmental issues through integrated solutions rather than through fragmented, incremental approaches that meet one objective at the expense of the others. A sustainable community manages its human, natural, and financial resources equitably and takes a long-term view - one that is focused on both present and future generations. Sustainability success relies upon having specific and measurable targets for indicators related to energy, water, carbon, and waste.

Communities are typically designed for vehicles, and in rural areas not served by transit, vehicles are the main mode of transportation. According to Statistics Canada (2016), over 86% of residents in Bruce County commute to work by private vehicle. Climate change mitigation strategies that are focused on reducing the reliance on private vehicles and GHG emissions promote a supportive, mixed use and compact urban structure, and have multi-modal transportation systems that support active movement - such as cycling or walking.

Recommended Directions

- Provincial policy directs planning authorities to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate by supporting energy conservation, efficient land use and development patterns, and embracing the use of green infrastructure and natural areas for water infiltration.
- Energy and water conservation, waste reduction, and improved air quality are important components of sustainable design. Consider policies which enhance the sustainable design of new development and buildings, including:
 - Promoting energy conservation by reducing demand for energy from the grid and encouraging renewable energy production. Renewable energy sources that could be employed include the use of solar thermal and photovoltaic equipment, geo-exchange, and/or wind power. Proposed alternative energy source(s) could be used in combination with energy from the grid;
 - Minimizing air quality and climate change impacts through *complete communities*, *active transportation*, reduced parking strategy, separation of sensitive land uses, etc.;
 - Encouraging building(s) that are LEED® Certified or recognized or accredited by a third-party certification program i.e., Energy Star, BREAM, etc.;
 - Promoting innovative residential and public building designs that contribute to energy reduction and natural resource conservation, green roofs, synergies between buildings and site management practices; and
 - Utilizing passive solar orientation in the layout of new development to maximize solar energy gain opportunities.
- One of the consequences of a changing climate is the development of heat islands. This term refers to urban areas with higher temperatures, typically caused by heat-absorbing buildings, roads, and other hard surfaces, such as surface parking lots. Responding to the heat island effect requires strategies related to both the built and natural environment and may include promoting green (living) roofs or light-coloured roofs, establishing a tree canopy target, using light coloured paving materials, and supporting green building standards.

Encourage low impact and green building design through their integration with existing natural ecosystems, minimization of pollution, and the use of renewable and alternative energy sources.

What We Heard

There was strong support for encouraging low impact and green building design through their integration with existing natural ecosystems, minimization of pollution, and the use of renewable and alternative sources, with 94% of respondents being in support. In their comments, respondents noted that there needs to be a balance between green energy and building and people, as there is a belief that it does not always consider the needs of people. Respondents noted that there needs to be space to accommodate housing for people. Some respondents also noted that they did not support development occurring altogether and made mention of their preference to allow natural areas to remain as they are.

Discussion

The best communities have a plan that includes the right balance between clear direction for development and the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances over time - policy changes, changes in engineering techniques, demographic changes, and broader societal changes.

Municipalities and conservation authorities have historically relied on statutory approaches such as a hazard-based model that separates people and assets from known hazards. This model uses standards, such as a 100-year flood, as a basis for public infrastructure decisions. The increasing severity and occurrence of extreme weather events and the risks they pose may prove that this approach is costly and unsustainable in the long-term. A combination of approaches to flood mitigation may be required. At the local level, policies should be developed for Low Impact Development (LID) measures to promote increased evapotranspiration, infiltration and groundwater recharge, and lower surface runoff volumes and flow rates. LID measures include the application of green roofs, bioretention areas, increased pervious cover assist with water infiltration, cisterns, etc. that can be included as adaptation or mitigation measures.

Recommended Directions

- Support opportunities for best management practices for stormwater to protect against flooding and erosion while improving water quality by reducing the frequency of discharge, runoff volume, and peak flows for most storms. Consider low impact development (LID) techniques that focus on runoff prevention, treat storm water as close to the source as possible, and use natural systems as the integrating framework.

- Demonstrate leadership in sustainable forms of green building design and technology, including the incorporation of renewable and alternative energy sources. Support renewable energy sources that present the opportunity for a distributed generation model - meaning the energy is produced, stored, and used near to where it will be consumed. Renewable energy and energy sources include:
 - Photovoltaics;
 - Wind;
 - Biomass;
 - Geothermal;
 - Solar thermal;
 - Combined heat and power;
 - District energy; and,
 - Low impact hydro-electric.

Protect and expand the urban forest and tree canopy for human and environmental health.

What We Heard

Most respondents (97%) expressed their support for protecting and expanding the urban forest and tree canopy for human and environmental health. Respondents commented on the need to live in a healthy environment that encourages people to use the outdoor spaces around them - this means investing in green areas. There is a general concern over the removal of trees in the area and deforestation as a result of development opportunities, as was mentioned previously. There is a desire from residents to implement a tree replacement program to replace the trees that have been lost and also to contribute to the creation of a flourishing and healthy ecosystem. Some respondents noted the potential for appraisals of natural features and refinement of policies related to forest and tree clearing. Some respondents also made specific mention that while tree planting and expanding the urban forest and canopy, there should also be other actionable items in place to fight climate change and mitigate the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.

Discussion

Urban forests provide many benefits to the County, such as reducing air pollution, mitigating the urban heat island effect, energy savings, habitat for urban wildlife, biodiversity, and opportunities for recreation and physical activity. It

is important that the urban forest, and the tree canopy, are provided with the required protection and that the County identifies objectives for how it can be enhanced and expanded. Trees provide ecological services that benefit human and environmental health, such as reducing the heat island effect, sequestering greenhouse gases, providing shade in the summer, separating pedestrians from vehicular traffic, and contributing to more appealing sidewalks and streets.

Recommended Directions

- Informed by the “Natural Legacy” Discussion paper, protect, and enhance local and regional ecosystems and biological diversity.
- Protect urban forests and tree canopy and identify objectives for how it can be enhanced and expanded. Trees provide ecological services that benefit human and environmental health, such as reducing the heat island effect, sequestering greenhouse gases, providing shade in the summer, separating pedestrians from vehicular traffic, and contributing to more appealing sidewalks and streets.
- Through the Official Plan, the urban forest policies should be reviewed, considering updates related to a tree canopy target, minimum tree cover requirements, naturalization programs, and species selection to support climate change adaptation:
 - Consider expanded vegetation and tree planting in existing and new developments to increase the tree canopy;
 - Provide robust species selection to anticipate climate change conditions and operational constraints;
 - Provide, when possible and in concert with appropriate safety measures, street trees on both sides of the road in the public right-of-way; and,
 - Encourage a diversity of tree species in parks and along each road, native to the County, non-invasive, drought and salt tolerant, and low maintenance.

6.6 A Resilient Community

A resilient community can effectively respond to emergencies because it has a plan in place, responsibilities assigned and facilities available. Natural or human made disasters are considered and the necessities of life are provided, particularly for those who are most at risk.

Support Emergency Preparedness Planning that mitigates the impacts of climate change and related extreme weather events.

What We Heard

Of all survey respondents, 93% indicated their support for supporting Emergency Preparedness Planning that mitigates the impacts of climate change and related extreme weather events. In their comments, respondents noted the importance of ensuring that the climate crisis is a consideration in every aspect of this plan, some even noting that sustainability and climate change need be a priority to ensure that there is a future where other policies and strategies can be accommodated, specifically as Bruce County has already been experiencing the impacts of climate change through instances such as deforestation, the effects of human interference with natural land, ongoing lakeshore erosion, coastline fragmentation, rising lake levels and the buildup of plastics in natural areas.

Discussion

The need for resiliency is becoming more urgent due to weather extremes, economic disruption, and resource depletion. There is a desire to better understand how resilience can be built into our urban environments to ensure our ability to adapt, as well as establish a focused way of understanding and applying resilience within the practice of urban design and planning. A resilient community can effectively respond to emergencies, both related to climate change and otherwise, because it has a plan in place, responsibilities assigned and facilities available.

Recommended Direction

- Explore opportunities in the Official Plan to support Emergency Preparedness Planning with respect to development, infrastructure, and systems to ensure access basic needs are designed in a way that mitigates the impacts of climate change and related extreme weather events, such as flooding, heat waves, severe winter storms, and supply chain disruption.

7 Next Steps

The Communities Discussion Paper forms the foundation for developing detailed land use planning policies for healthy community development in the new County Official Plan. The process for the new Official Plan will begin soon and will feature additional opportunities for community input.