



Committee Report

To: Councilor Steve Hammell, Chair and
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Mark Paoli
Director of Planning and Development

Date: January 20, 2022

Re: Plan the Bruce: Business Discussion Paper

Staff Recommendation:

That the Plan the Bruce: Business Draft Discussion Paper be received for information and circulated to Local Municipalities and key stakeholders for comment.

Background:

The Plan the Bruce: Business Discussion paper is one of eight Discussion Papers that support the Official Plan project. The Business Guiding Principle is about growing economic health through business diversity.

Community Engagement:

MDB Insight, in partnership with Bruce County staff, completed research, analysis, and engagement activities aimed at gaining insight from key stakeholders, businesses, and groups of economic participants as part of the Plan the Bruce: Business Project and the development of the Bruce County Economic Development Strategy.

In summary, MDB completed:

- 27 Stakeholder interviews
- 10 Focus Group Workshops
- 138 Business Surveys
- 1 Presentation and Feedback from the Economic Development Officers from each Municipality (two were absent but were sent the recordings)

While these engagement activities were factored into the development of the Plan the Bruce: Business Draft Discussion Paper, staff recommends a final consultation step with Local Municipalities on the recommended directions.

Recommended Directions:

Recommended directions are summarized in the table below.

Topic	Recommended Directions
Identifying Economic Development as a Key Objective	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add a key principle to the Official Plan that speaks to a flexible approach to economic development. 2. Work with local municipalities to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Support an appropriate range and mix of business, industrial, commercial, and institutional uses to meet long-term community needs; ii. Maintain range and choice of suitable sites for employment; and, iii. Support diversity of housing types and tenures to provide affordable choices for the workforce.
Reinforcing the Economic Development Strategic Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Through the Official Plan, support and reinforce the Economic Development Strategy to plan for a strong and healthy economy and anticipate changing economic trends with policies that support: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Rationalizing and protecting the County’s inventory of Employment Areas for appropriate employment generating land uses; ii. Supporting a full range of employment generating uses, including office development, institutional uses, and a variety of restaurants, retail, and service commercial businesses; iii. Constructing, upgrading, and maintaining high quality municipal infrastructure systems and public service facilities, particularly those that support the sustainable management of tourism; iv. Facilitating efficient and convenient transportation options for the movement of people and goods; v. Planning for an appropriate range of home occupations and home-based businesses, including artist studio/maker spaces and live/work units, within land use designations that permit residential uses; and, vi. Developing policy directions which support an agricultural systems approach and opportunities for on-farm diversified uses while protecting the system from incompatible uses.

Topic	Recommended Directions
<p>Ensuring a Diverse Land Supply</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="402 184 1435 661">4. For employment land employment (business parks, industrial uses), differentiate what is "effective supply" versus supply that is available as a longer-term proposition. The concept of effective supply is crucial to attracting new employers in this sector, and effective supply is important to offering reasonable choice in locations throughout the County that are "shovel-ready". That means the lots are created and available for sale, municipal infrastructure is either in the ground, or readily available, and that the properties are designated in the Official Plan, and pre-zoned for the intended use. The County should continue to work with local municipalities to assess the designated employment areas to ensure the lands are appropriate for their intended use and adjust the employment land budget accordingly. <li data-bbox="402 699 1435 884">5. Official Plan policy needs to be as flexible as possible to facilitate a new use, or expansion of existing uses, as quickly as possible, minimizing hurdles to implementation. This may include policies with respect to scaling a comprehensive review to the size or complexity of a proposal when site-specific expansion is proposed. <li data-bbox="402 921 1435 1283">6. Include policies to allow for minor employment land area adjustments or conversions in the development of the new Official Plan. This creates flexibility for employment land conversions to be approved where certain tests or criteria have been met, for example, where the conversion helps to mitigate an existing land use conflict, or where the conversion provides for a specific and desirable alternative development opportunity. The definition of "minor" will need to be more fully explored in the context of the existing land supply, and the achievement of the identified tests or criteria. <li data-bbox="402 1320 1435 1619">7. To accommodate population-related employment, ensure that land opportunities for the expansion of the retail and service commercial sector is adequately considered and tailored to the anticipated residential growth of an area, and the understanding of whether these uses are to be accommodated in an expanded or intensified downtown, OR within an existing or newly planned retail and service commercial nodes located outside of the downtown. <li data-bbox="402 1656 1435 1902">8. Major institutional uses like a significant medical centre or a post-secondary campus tend to go through their own site selection process. Anticipating these uses in specific locations is difficult, but not outside of what the County may want to consider. Office uses should generally be permitted in downtowns and can also be accommodated in existing or newly planned retail and service commercial nodes located outside of the downtown.

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 in the 2021 Planning and Development Business Plan and development of the new County Official Plan is a major initiative in 2022.

Report Author:

Jack Van Dorp,
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Departmental Approval:

Mark Paoli, Director
Planning and Development

Approved for Submission:

Sandra Datars Bere
Chief Administrative Officer