



Committee Report

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

From: Mark Paoli
Director of Planning and Development

Date: March 17, 2022

Re: Plan the Bruce: Business Discussion Paper

Staff Recommendation:

That the Plan the Bruce: Business Discussion Paper be endorsed as a foundation for developing policies in the new Official Plan.

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. The Business discussion paper was prepared by the Planning Partnership in partnership with County Staff, based on research completed by MDB Insight.

In January 2022, The Planning and Development Committee received a draft discussion paper and directed staff to circulate local Municipalities and key stakeholders for comments. Staff circulated over 200 municipal and stakeholder contacts who had participated in the Plan the Bruce - Business discussion paper and Economic Development strategic plan process.

Municipal and Stakeholder Comments:

Comments were received from Huron-Kinloss and Saugeen Shores, and one community stakeholder. These comments are attached. Historic Saugeen Metis noted that they had no comments to add on the current discussion paper.

Huron-Kinloss comments emphasize need for partnerships and ensuring that local goals, challenges, and priorities are supported. Planning and Development Staff are continuing to engage with local Municipalities on the macro approach that sees all levels of government working together to support economic development.

Saugeen Shores comments support the flexible approach to economic development that is outlined in the discussion paper, along with reference to the economic development strategic plan and its need to be kept current. They also support the concept of 'effective supply' as a way of being prepared to support business development through greater consideration to having shovel-ready lands.

Saugeen Shores also noted the critical importance of housing, as noted in the business discussion paper, with a recommendation that it be foregrounded in terms of policy and economic-related programs that are impacted by housing-related matters.

Support for diversity of housing types and tenures is identified as a recommended direction under the theme of “Economic Development as a key objective.” To reflect the importance of approaches to address housing supply and mix, the work already completed through the Plan the Bruce - Homes discussion paper completed in 2021, and also that further opportunities may emerge, staff has updated discussion paper **Recommended Direction 2 (iii)**, with changes in bold in the table below.

We note further that staff are continuing efforts with local municipalities to advance near-term policy changes through development approvals and By-Law changes that increase as-of-right supply and mix opportunities while we advance the overall Official Plan project, and work to support Human Services in its role as Housing Service provider.

A **Community comment** noted opportunity for brewing/distilling as a permitted use on commercial and rural properties; at the County Plan level, greater flexibility for such uses is afforded through the ‘On-Farm Diversified Use’ opportunities outlined in County Official Plan Amendment C-2021-025, also on this agenda.

Recommended Directions

Final 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, using the directions outlined in Plan the Bruce - Homes discussion paper and others that may emerge as governments at all levels work to increase housing supply and affordability.

Topic	Recommended Directions
Reinforcing the Economic Development Strategic Plan	<p>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:</p> <ul 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="407 197 1443 598">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="407 640 1443 808">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="407 850 1443 1144">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="407 1186 1443 1417">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="407 1459 1443 1690">8. Major institutional uses like a significant medical centre or a postsecondary 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:

Working with Human Services in respect of Housing supply and affordability considerations.

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:

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Departmental Approval:

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Approved for Submission:

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