



## Committee Report

**To:** Warden Mitch Twolan  
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

**From:** Kara Van Myall  
Director of Planning and Development

**Date:** September 19, 2019

**Re:** Community Development - A Regional Strategy

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### Recommendation:

The Community Development - A Regional Strategy report is for information.

### Background:

Research shows that quality of life is outpacing economic development in that jobs follow people. The spotlight is on people and what motivates them to choose a place to live. This research also tells us that people choose where they want to live ahead of a looking for work. In this new context talent comes to great communities. The premise behind Spruce the Bruce (STB) has, since its inception, been to grow communities from the commercial core out. Spruce the Bruce is more than a grant program, it is a community development program.

Now more than ever, rural communities are in the spotlight. People want to move where there exists an attainable balance between life and work. Rural areas are becoming more and more appealing. It is important to identify the attributes people look for when they move to a community, address those gaps, build on them and then message this to the identified audience. This is the framework for the County's "Be An Explorer" campaign and how we work through the steps in STB to build great places to visit and to live, drawing on the "explorer" mindset to see Bruce County as their next home.

### Bruce County Community Development Regional Strategy:

Successful community development drives private sector investment toward specific identified priorities. A Bruce County strategy would drive development across the County with incentives that target regional barriers to growth and development. A process to evaluate and consider what those broad level regional issues are would be implemented to ensure barriers are identified and appropriate solutions are constructed.

Since resident attraction and community development are strongly aligned, this initiative supports the County's marketing and communications plan to motivate people to live and work and build a business in Bruce County.

Building a Regional Strategy for Community Development is envisioned as being advanced with Council's leadership and will support the advancement of the Guiding Principle #6 from the Bruce GPS: To create wellbeing through access to complete and healthy communities.

This work could also inform an updated policy context in the County's Official Plan. The outcome may be the development of a Community Improvement Policy that would then be incorporated in the Spruce the Bruce Program as an extension of the County's community development work, which is integral to resident / workforce attraction.

As an example, areas to address across Bruce County could include:

- Address Housing Needs - support the need for attainable housing, including the provision for secondary suites, multi-unit housing and rental housing stock;
- Agriculture Enhancements - Support for value-added agricultural uses, agri-tourism or facility improvement;
- Industrial Enhancements - Support adaptable re-use of commercial, industrial and institutional buildings.
- Residential and Commercial Enhancements - Support for the re-development of underutilized properties or the development of existing properties - converting upper story space to residential or converting residential space to shared office space.
- Transportation Enhancements - Support for pedestrian friendly transit, ride share, bike lanes; and
- Strengthen Commercial Cores - Continue support for commercial core areas through the current STB offerings and add additional incentives to support the incorporation of technology to improve business operations.

### **Conclusion:**

The core incentives provided through the STB program are working to create vibrant commercial cores across engaged communities. A Bruce County Regional Community Development Strategy could transition to and incorporate a broad regional approach to community development in the current landscape.

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

Through the 2020 budget deliberations, staff are proposing a major initiative that incorporates this work through existing staff resources and funds. The goal is to accommodate program changes in 2021. This allows for a careful consideration of priorities, areas of focus and incentives that support the advancement of specific goals in each municipality.

### **Interdepartmental Consultation:**

None

### **Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:**

Goal #6 Explore alternate options to improve efficiency, service

Goal #7 Stimulate and reward innovation and economic development

Written by: Jill Roote, Economic Development Manager, Planning and Development