

Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association

Review of Huron County's Draft Revision of the County Official Plan (October 8, 2009)

Executive Summary

The Board of the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association commends the Huron County Council and its Planning Department for their community outreach in seeking extensive input into the 5 year revision of the County Official Plan. BSRA highlights large portions of the revision that are particularly positive, and it also emphasizes five major concerns. It asks the County to reconsider the draft revision in light of these five concerns.

The BSRA report stresses the importance of those sections in the draft Official Plan which recognize environmental health concerns, the protection of the quality of surface waters, the watershed approach to improving stewardship of the natural environment, the need to protect watercourses, and the importance of improving and enhancing natural landscapes. The relationship between the Nutrient Management Act and the pollution of surface waters and lake water must be understood. Stronger community partnerships must be formed. The emphasis on trails, walking paths, and cycling is endorsed. Alternate energy systems must be constructed and placed in ways that protect the health and well-being of both the citizens and the natural environment. The draft Official Plan recognizes that the Lakeshore Residential areas are changing as these settlement areas attract the development of winterized seasonal and permanent residences.

The BSRA Report emphasizes five major concerns and asks the County to reconsider them.

- (1) The draft plan implies that Lakeshore Settlement Areas will not be given equal consideration with other settlement areas for county and municipal services. The question arises why the rate of taxation in these settlement areas is the same as the rate in the more highly favoured settlement areas.
- (2) It is very strange that the draft plan does not refer to Lake Huron as an asset or a concern for Huron County, even though it brands itself as "Ontario's West Coast". The plan should incorporate guidelines for the protection, use, and promotion of the Lake itself.
- (3) The draft plan only identifies four "pillars" for the Huron County economy: agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, cultural/creative. This misses the realities of both the current economy and the development of the future economy. The structure of sections 2 and 4 of the draft plan should be restructured to take into account the importance of trade, personal and business services, construction and utilities, finance and real estate. The County must look to diversification, not just intensification of traditional practices.
- (4) Renewable energy systems such as wind, solar, and biomass, must be developed in ways that protect nearby residents, tourism, and the natural and scenic landscape. Decisions must be made respecting the interests of the whole community.
- (5) Large and intensive livestock operations must avoid the waste management problems that have been experienced in other parts of North America. The County should reach for the highest standards of responsible waste control and become a leader in Ontario.