



2011 Farmland Preservation Forum
Renewing Rural Economies: Agricultural Development Forum

February 18, 2011

Forum Proceedings

Table of Contents

About the Forum.....	1
Presentation Summaries	1
Learning Each Other's Language: Finding Core Strength in Collaboration	1
Dave Hanly , Perth County Planner - Planning Perspective	
Marlene Werry , Durham Region EDO - Economic Development Perspective	
Peter Lambrick , Halton Region Farmer - Farm Community Perspective	
Connecting Community Food Interests to Agricultural Economic Development.....	3
Lauren Baker , Toronto Food Policy Council Coordinator, Toronto Public Health	
Engaging Municipal Councillors in Agricultural Issues	4
Nick DeBoer , Peel Region Farmer, Caledon Councillor	
Prospering with a Stable or Declining Populations: Municipal Best Practices	5
Dr. Wayne Caldwell , University of Guelph Professor, County of Huron Planner	
B.C. Agricultural Area Plans: Communities Taking Action for Local Agriculture.....	6
Jim LeMaistre , Land Use Planner, British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture	
Land Use Planning and Farmland Protection: Comparing Oregon and Ontario.....	7
Jim Johnson , Land Use Planner, Oregon Department of Agriculture	
Major Themes and Challenges Arising from Forum Discussion	8
Further Resources & Related Initiatives.....	11
List of Forum Participants	13
Forum Sponsors	15

Click on hyperlinks within Table of Contents to view power point presentations from the forum.

About the Forum

Over 130 professionals from across Ontario gathered at the University of Guelph for the Ontario Farmland Trust's (OFT) 2011 Farmland Preservation Forum on February 18, 2011. The intent of the *Renewing Rural Economies Forum* was to explore opportunities for collaboration and new policy directions in support of agricultural economic development. The forum brought together municipal planners, economic development officers and councillors, as well as various provincial ministries and the farm community, to cooperatively respond to the complex economic challenges facing Ontario's agricultural sector.

OFT hosted the event as part of its *Places to Grow Food* project, supported by the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation. The Trust believes that farmland and local agriculture should be valued as part of community economic development, and seen as a major part of revitalizing rural economies. Achieving OFT's mission of "Protecting Farmland for Farmers" requires collaboration and understanding between stakeholders to ensure both land use planning and OFT's community-based farmland conservation efforts are supportive of continued farming activities and responsive to the broader needs of the agricultural sector.

Many perspectives on agricultural economic development were profiled at the forum, including those of farmers, planners, economic development officers, municipal councillors and urban food advocates. Case studies from British Columbia and Oregon were also presented to provide some outside comparison to work being done in Ontario. The forum provided a space for professionals to network and dialogue about new ways to support farmland preservation and agricultural development. Some questions posed for discussion included:

- What opportunities exist for further growth of Ontario's agriculture sector?
- How do we reduce barriers to economic development in agriculture?
- What problem-solving is already occurring in municipalities across Ontario?
- How can we influence future policy direction for agriculture and rural development?

Presentation Summaries

Click on hyperlinks below to view complete power point presentations from the forum.

[Click Here](#) for Speaker Biographies.

Learning Each Other's Language: Finding Core Strength in Collaboration

The forum opened with a panel discussion between a planner, economic development officer and farmer, sharing their perspectives on agricultural economic development. From this discussion, it was clear the three professions must work together to achieve local economic and sustainability objectives. Each has a unique role to play in agricultural economic development, bringing different skills to the table, but there can often be a lack of communication and understanding between the professions when addressing issues in agriculture. The importance of collaboration and sharing of expertise among municipal staff was emphasized, while at the same time engaging stakeholders in and effort to enhance opportunities for growth and economic stability of the agricultural sector.

Panelists each presented their profession's top practical ideas for improving local agricultural economies:

Dave Hanly, Perth County Planner - Planning Perspective

- Establish clear and understandable policies and provisions for agricultural areas in local planning documents (Official Plans and zoning by-laws) that:
 - Protect and preserve prime farmlands for farming purposes for use by current and future generations of farmers,
 - Provide agriculture with an area free from conflicting and/or incompatible land use activities, and
 - Support the needs of agriculture by permitting land use activities in agricultural areas that are only complimentary to and supportive of agriculture.
- Establish clear and understandable policies and provisions for settlement areas (e.g. towns and villages) in local planning documents (Official Plans and zoning by-laws) that:
 - Direct non-farm development to settlement areas and provide sufficient areas for new non-farm development growth in these settlement areas where impacts on and conflicts with farming activities can be minimized, and
 - Ensure OPs and zoning bylaws are updated on a regular basis to address land needs, land supply, and servicing needs of settlement areas on an ongoing basis.
- Make provision in local planning documents (Official Plans and zoning by-laws) for farm-related agri-business uses and secondary uses to locate in agricultural areas, such as:
 - Agricultural commercial/industrial uses,
 - Secondary farm occupation uses,
 - Home occupation uses and
 - Value-added agricultural uses.
- Communication leads to knowledge, which leads to sound decisions
 - Many people need to be involved in renewing rural economies. Be as inclusive as possible, take time to listen, and consider the input of all stakeholders.

Marlene Werry, Durham Region EDO - Economic Development Perspective

- Develop infrastructure supportive of the agriculture industry.
 - Road Construction – where are roads built or improved, and how?
 - Shoulder width, soft curbs, height and width of bridges, overpasses and underpasses all affect safe and effective movement of farm equipment.
 - Where are full-load roads constructed? (e.g. the landscape sector needs to move a lot of heavy product in the spring)
 - Three-phase hydro capacity:
 - Are on-farm renewable energy projects supported through the grid?
 - Are larger primary agriculture operations able to expand?
 - Broadband for high speed internet access:
 - This is critical for farm businesses, from uploading livestock registrations to selling directly on the commodity market.
 - Multi-modal transportation routes:
 - Consideration needs to be given to the movement of agricultural goods.
 - Good planning is needed for routes that prevent further loss of farmland.
- Prevent fragmentation of the agricultural landbase.
 - Every planning department needs to complete a full LEAR study to identify prime agricultural areas within their municipality:
 - Land Evaluation (LE) – assesses the land capability for agriculture.

- Area Review (AR) – assesses other factors that affect farm activities (parcel size, fragmentation, tile drainage, etc.).
- Educate planners and other municipal staff about agriculture.
 - Farm tours for policy and decision makers can bring awareness to the unique needs of the agricultural sector.
 - Planners need to understand the affect of buffers, minimum distance separation, building requirements and timeliness of zoning amendments on local agriculture.
 - Agricultural EDO staff can assist planners by explaining unique needs of clients and the rationale for planning applications.
 - Ideally there would be one municipal contact person to address planning issues related to agricultural projects, and one person to deal with permits.
- Ensure consistent interpretation of policy.
 - Consistency of interpretation of legislation is critical, between upper and lower tier municipalities, as well as among lower tier municipalities (by-laws, fees, etc.). Treatment of value-added agriculture (on-farm processing, agri-tourism, etc.) as commercial or industrial can discourage innovation and farm business expansion.
- Create buffers to reduce rural-urban conflict and protect farms from nearby development.
 - Buffer areas should be incorporated into new development plans adjacent to farms through use of berms, natural topography, windbreaks, etc.
 - Buffers help protect farm operations from noise, odour and dust complaints, as well as trespassing and vandalism.
 - Planners can play an advocacy role in lobbying the province to bring in appropriate legislation to protect farm operations through buffers.

Peter Lambrick, *Halton Region Farmer - Farm Community Perspective*

- Hire a local Agricultural Coordinator/Economic Developer to liaise between the agricultural community, planners and councillors.
- Incorporate the word “local” into public institutional food procurement policies.
- Consolidate and expand grant and loan programs in support of agricultural development.
- Create local Agricultural Advisory Committees in all counties/regions.
- Engage the Ministry of Finance and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation in discussion about fair and consistent taxation of value-added and value-retention projects on farms.
- Provide more starter opportunities for new Canadians and young people interested in farming.

Following the panel presentations, a series of questions were posed for small-group collaborative discussions, allowing for an exchange of opinions and experiences among forum participants. Participant dialogue was captured by note-takers; the main ideas are included in the ***Major Themes Arising from Forum Discussion*** section below.

Connecting Community Food Interests to Agricultural Economic Development

Lauren Baker, *Toronto Food Policy Council Coordinator, Toronto Public Health*

Agricultural economic development issues can be linked directly to food-related issues identified by a local community. This can involve linkages to health, education, environment, culture and social equity, and lead to food policy development at the local level. Lauren defined food policy as both

actions and in-actions by government that influences the supply, quality, price, production, distribution and consumption of food. She showed examples of increasing community interest in issues of food, including food accessibility concerns, food literacy initiatives, recent urban farming projects and educational farm field trips for urbanites. With community-lead goals of creating healthy and equitable local food systems, there is a growing acknowledgement of the need for building stronger connections between urban areas and rural/agricultural areas, Lauren noted.

Across Ontario, in places such as Waterloo, Kawartha Lakes, Hamilton and Thunder Bay, municipalities are developing cross-sectoral groups linking health, agricultural economic development and environment to form food and agriculture strategies, food charters and food policy councils in support of vibrant local food economies. Lauren encouraged forum participants to consider their local government's "food levers." What issues are municipal and community priorities? Are there levers related to farmland preservation, planning, economic development, environment or public health that could open doors to new opportunities and support for agriculture?

Engaging Municipal Councillors in Agricultural Issues

[Nick DeBoer](#), Peel Region Farmer, Caledon Councillor

How do municipalities address issues of growth, economic resiliency and land use as they relate to agriculture? Nick was able to offer a unique perspective on agricultural economics, planning and development as both a farmer and municipal politician.

Growth: To have growth within the agriculture sector, there needs to be enough flexibility in policies and regulations that enables farmers to change business strategies when necessary to remain competitive. The sector also needs to have the capacity to create long term sustainability by engaging new generations of farmers. Growth is enabled when producers have the ability to deliver real efficiencies in agricultural operations and improve profitability.

Planning: In land use planning, the goal has to be an actively farmed, productive and profitable rural landscape. Economic resiliency in rural/agricultural communities can be achieved in part by encouraging diversity on individual farms and within the broader agricultural community, with flexibility to introduce value-added products and service on farms.

Engaging the Farm Community: Farmers are highly engaged in their communities and are concerned about their community's future. At the same time, however, farmers tend to be reluctant to trust and accept advice from those who they feel don't understand the industry. Nick suggested engaging the farm community with information, not opinion, asking lots of questions and listening carefully to the issues and concerns raised. He also recommended becoming involved in local agricultural industry associations.

Engaging Municipal Politicians: Nick feels it is everyone's job to work on improving their municipal council's understanding of the local needs of agriculture, appealing to the universal desire for building stronger rural economies. He recommended highlighting the fact that a successful agricultural industry translates into successful communities through spin-off revenue, new businesses, diversity and value added products and services. A major part of creating a thriving, dynamic rural countryside, however, is ensuring farm profitability.

Prospering with a Stable or Declining Populations: Municipal Best Practices

[Dr. Wayne Caldwell](#), *University of Guelph Professor, County of Huron Planner*

This session included a panel of three Economic Development Officers, Marlene Werry (Durham Region), Paul Nichol (Huron County) and Dan Taylor (Price Edward County), and was moderated by Dr. Wayne Caldwell. The three Ontario community economic development case studies were chosen because of their diverse experiences in sustaining agriculture in a near-urban environment (Durham), collaborating on economic development through unique partnerships (Huron), and developing the “creative economy” (Price Edward).

The panel discussion was based on the presumption that population growth is not always necessary for rural prosperity, building on the 2010 reports *Resource Materials for Community Economic Development: Prospering with a Stable or Declining Population*, and *A Guide to Rural Community Economic Development: Best Practices for Your Community*, published through the University of Guelph School of Rural Planning and Development.

The image at right was presented, showing Community Economic Development Indicators of Success. Community and Municipal Leadership make up the foundation, with economic development pillars of Sustainability and Creativity supporting a community’s overall Quality of Life alongside Planning and Visioning, which open doors through municipal best practices of Community Engagement, Partnerships, etc.

Each panelist chose to share an example of best practice from their municipality. Paul talked about Huron’s partnership approach to economic development, involving not only County planning and economic development staff, but also the Huron Community Futures Development Corporation. Collectively, these groups develop community plans, co-hire and co-manage staff, pool financial resources and make joint decisions. In three years they have assisted 400 businesses with start up and expansion, including some agricultural enterprises.



www.RuralPlanningAndDevelopment.ca

In Durham, Marlene has seen positive response to the Region’s community engagement efforts. One example is a recent Business Retention and Expansion study for Durham’s agriculture and agri-food sector. This involved interviews with various agricultural businesses and online surveys to identify the needs of the sector and opportunities for new investment. Getting out of the office and interacting with business owners, creating committees with diverse community representation and developing an agricultural leadership program are other engagement tactics the Region has used.

Several years ago Price Edward County set out to be the first “creative rural economy” in Ontario, which required a lot of leadership and planning. A visioning process was begun and market research conducted. A sectoral model was adopted to build on communities’ assets and quality of place. There has been a heavy investment in social media, marketing the community through online storytelling, etc. While there is still youth out-migration, many people are entering the community to start new businesses.

The panel was asked what advice they would offer to a community that is struggling to develop an approach to stagnation or decline. Paul encouraged participants to abandon the idea that economic development has to be large scale. It is equally important to support small businesses. Marlene indicated that municipalities need to be more creative in fostering public-private investment. Dan emphasized flexibility and imagination in preparing for the future. Politicians tend to be risk adverse and look to the past to develop policy, he said. Planners and EDOs need to be forward-thinking and be ready to respond to new opportunities.

The final question posed to the panel was simply: “What keeps you awake at night?” Youth retention, complacency/resistance to change and the sustainability of agriculture were listed as the panelists’ top concerns.

B. C. Agricultural Area Plans: Communities Taking Action for Local Agriculture

[Jim LeMaistre](#), Land Use Planner, British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture

The British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture encourages municipalities to create Agricultural Area Plans which include economic studies and often provide direction on economic development in support of farming communities. Agricultural Area Plans aim to create opportunities to strengthen farming and contribute to the long-term sustainability of agriculture in a particular community.

Every AAP is unique, and based on a community’s needs. They can be designed to:

- Raise awareness of agriculture.
- Build community support for farming.
- Identify opportunities to support and expand farming.
- Resolve limitations for agriculture.
- Promote land use compatibility at the urban-rural interface.

Some common elements to the process of developing an AAP include:

- The planning process is lead by the municipality or regional district;
- Care is taken in defining the agricultural planning area;
- An agricultural planning steering committee normally guides the process;
- The steering committee is inclusive of members of the farm community- an agricultural advisory committee may be called upon to assist or act as the AAP steering committee;
- B.C. Ministry of Agriculture staff are often asked to participate and provide resource assistance;
- The information base is strengthened by such means as land use inventories, statistical material and the development of a background report;
- Issues and opportunities are identified to guide the emerging plan policies;
- The plan's policies are intentionally "action oriented" providing practical solutions to the local issues that are identified.
- A clear plan for implementation is included; and

- Organizations best positioned to implement solutions are identified.

AAPs are typically prepared for local government and farm business operators, providing recommendations for policies and bylaws supportive of agriculture to be incorporated in Official Plans or zoning. The plans can also be used as a business development and marketing strategy for farmers, focusing on new products, training, tours and consumer local food guides. Jim highlighted several examples of successful AAPs, sharing experiences establishing successful partnerships between the province, municipalities and the agri-food industry through the AAP development process. Agricultural Area Plans are clearly valuable tools for supporting and expanding farm activities and development in municipalities across B.C.

More information on AAPs can be found at www.al.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/planag/index.htm

Land Use Planning and Farmland Protection: Comparing Oregon and Ontario

Jim Johnson, Land Use Planner, Oregon Department of Agriculture

Jim discussed Oregon's experience over the decades in prioritizing lands for protection, establishing urban growth boundaries and encouraging farm activity through creative tax and land use policies.

Jim summarized Oregon State's land use planning system, which is in many ways directly comparable to that of Ontario's. As is the case in Ontario, Jim reiterated the economic importance of agriculture, showing data that places agriculture as the most recession-proof and stable element of Oregon's economy. Oregon introduced strict regulations on use and protection of prime farmland in the 1970s, including urban growth boundaries, planning and farm tax law.

Oregon has established statewide planning goals that all local comprehensive plans must legally be in conformity with, including agricultural land protection and directives on urban growth. There is recognition that farmland preservation includes efforts in both urban and rural areas. The fundamental strategy for farmland protection embedded in the statewide planning goals involves:

- Containment of urban development within urban growth boundaries,
- Protection of natural resources outside urban growth boundaries, and
- Efficient and effective use of urban land.

Oregon legislative policy mandates that:

- The maximum supply of agricultural land be preserved in large blocks,
- Expansion of urban development onto agricultural land be discouraged, as this increases conflict and public service and infrastructure costs, and
- A higher level of protection be provided to more productive land.

All prime farmland in Oregon is protected by an "exclusive farm use zone" (15.5 million acres), the state's strongest planning designation. It is very difficult to receive non-farm building approvals in this area, and no urban services are permitted. A contentious issue in Ontario, Oregon's approach to farm dwelling construction is interesting: farms must demonstrate \$80,000 gross farm income in three out of the last five years in order to qualify for farm dwelling approval. Rural non-farm dwelling construction and other non-farm land uses are limited to non-productive land where there are no perceived conflicts with agriculture.

Ontario could also learn from Oregon's farm value assessment and taxation policies. In Oregon, to qualify for the lower farm tax rate, farm properties must meet the commercial agriculture income measure mentioned above. This ensures tax breaks are benefiting authentic farmers and prevents hobby farmers from dominating the landscape.

Jim noted that the Oregon Farm Bureau is the only Farm Bureau in the United State that has consistently supported a state's farmland protection programs. In addition to witnessing a dramatic decrease in farmland conversion since the 1970s, this farm community perspective is a strong indication of success. It was clear from Jim's presentation that Ontario could learn a lot from Oregon's 40 years experience with effective planning for agriculture.

For more information on Oregon's land use planning system visit www.lcd.state.or.us

Major Themes and Challenges Arising from Forum Discussion

Summary of Ongoing Challenges in Ontario Agricultural Development

The following concerns were raised by presenters and forum participants as issues in Ontario agriculture that require greater attention:

1. Urban Pressures

- Continued fragmentation and loss of prime agricultural land to non-farm development.
- Effects of population and employment growth pressures on the destabilization of farming communities and the agricultural landbase.
- Challenges of near-urban farming, including increased traffic, which prohibits safe movement of farm equipment, and inflated land values, which make the land unaffordable for new and expanding farm operations.

2. Lack of Awareness

- Lack of awareness of the unique needs of the agriculture sector among municipal staff and politicians, and the general public.
- Under-representation of farm issues within the provincial legislature and on municipal councils, due to the small percentage of the population that is actively involved in farming.
- Undue expense, administrative burden and barriers to the farm sector created by:
 - Inconsistency in policy or policy interpretation/implementation across municipal borders relating to agricultural land use and business operations.
 - Lack of inter-ministry cooperation and dialogue in planning, policy development, etc. (government silos).

3. Uncertainty and Change

- Uncertainty in taxation of value-added agricultural activities.
- Effects of an aging and retiring farm population on land ownership and future farming trends.
- Challenges of farm profitability (competition with cheaper food imports, retailer and consumer demand for lower food prices).

Major Themes Arising from Forum Discussion:

1. Collaborate to Support Local Agriculture

- Choose to look at the bigger picture. Avoid treating issues in isolation.
 - See agriculture as a valuable component of broader community development.
 - Break down silos within and across municipalities and provincial ministries.
 - Initiate dialogue about policies that are supporting or hindering agricultural development.
 - Consider looking through an “agricultural lens” before making new legislative or policy decisions that could directly or indirectly impact the sustainability and growth of the agriculture and agri-food sectors.
 - Identify connections between local interests in agriculture, health, environment, community economic development and municipal sustainability targets.
- Coordinate efforts to support agriculture among municipal departments such as planning and economic development offices.
 - Encourage consistent interpretation of policy between upper and lower tier municipalities, as well as among lower tier municipalities
 - Meet regularly with colleagues working in planning, economic development, municipal politics and provincial policy who have an interest in supporting Ontario agriculture.
 - Collaborate with neighbouring municipalities, building on common interests and unique strengths of each to achieve broader policy goals (e.g. Greater Toronto Countryside Mayors Alliance).
- Partner with other groups to address specific issues in agriculture:
 - Local chapters of farm organizations (e.g. Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario)
 - Ontario Farmland Trust (localized farmland protection)
 - FarmStart (new farmer training)
 - Community food interest groups (e.g. food roundtables, food policy councils)
- Engage Farm Communities.
 - Establish Agricultural Advisory Committees at the County/Regional level to gather input and recommendations from the farm community on municipal policy development
 - Appoint a municipal Agricultural Coordinator to liaise between the agricultural community, planners and councillors and provide assistance to agricultural and agri-food businesses related to planning, permits, etc.
 - Make an effort to meet with farmers (attend local farm meetings, organize public meetings with the farm community), ask lots of questions and listen to concerns raised by the farm community.

2. Educate Municipal Staff and Politicians about Agriculture.

- Get out of the office, participate in farm tours and learn about agriculture.
 - Meeting with farmers, seeing how their farms are operated and having the ability to ask questions allows policy and decision makers to learn about the types of farming occurring in their jurisdiction and the unique needs of the area's agriculture sector:
 - Municipal Councillors may become more aware of farm activities within their ridings and realize the importance of agriculture to the local economy;
 - Planners may better understand how land use planning restrictions and the planning process impacts farm viability; and
 - Economic Development Officers may better understand the needs of agricultural clients, and become better informed about how to work at the strategic level, identifying opportunities for farm business growth and retention.
 - Know where agriculture is most established in your municipality. Look for ways to protect farmland in these areas and support farming activities. Understand the economic value of agriculture in the community.
 - Be aware of federal, provincial and inter-regional policies and regulations affecting local agriculture.
- Proactively explain concepts from your discipline to others.
 - Do planners and EDOs understand each other's work, and how it affects local agriculture? Has rapport and communication been established between planning and economic development offices?
 - Though planners and EDOs have distinctly different roles to play in community development (including agricultural development), it is important to recognize common ground, areas where their work intersects and opportunities for cooperation in support of agriculture.
 - Has an economic development and investment strategy for agriculture been created? Have planners, EDOs and stakeholders been included in this process?

3. Innovate through Leadership.

- Identify and pursue new opportunities to support agriculture.
 - Community development (including agricultural development) requires proactive recommendations from planners, Economic Development Officers and other municipal staff.
- Be ready to adapt to evolving agricultural economies. Think creatively. Decide which policy areas are flexible and which are not in preparing for the future.
- Keep ahead of the curve, anticipate changes within environmental and community demographics.
 - Conduct research to assist growth of the agriculture and agri-food employment sector.

- Listen to stakeholders and work to remove barriers to their growth and economic sustainability.
- Abandon the idea that economic development has to be large scale; it is equally important to support small businesses, particularly in improving adaptability.
- Become champions of agriculture, in ways appropriate to your role.
 - All municipal staff and politicians, including planners, EDOs, mayors and councillors, can play a role in promoting and supporting agriculture in their work, recognizing the sector's unique needs and far-reaching value to local economies, quality of life, protection and stewardship of the rural landscape, etc.
 - Staff within all provincial ministries can also be advocates for Ontario agriculture.

Further Resources & Related Initiatives

Further Resources

Planning Regional Food Systems: A Guide for Municipal Planning and Development in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Ontario Farmland Trust. 2010. Available at:

http://www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/sites/default/files/Planning_Regional_Food_Systems_FinalJanuary25.pdf

A Guide to Rural Community Economic Development: Best Practices for Your Community.

Dr. Wayne Caldwell. University of Guelph, 2010. Available at:

<http://www.ruralplanninganddevelopment.ca/index.html>

<http://www.waynecaldwell.ca/Projects/ruralced/Best%20Practices%20Guide-v2.pdf>

Resource Materials for Community Economic Development: Prospering with a Stable of Declining Population.

Dr. Wayne Caldwell. University of Guelph, 2010. Available at:

<http://www.waynecaldwell.ca/Projects/ruralced/Resource%20Manual%20-%20Final.pdf>

Rural Research Priorities.

Dr. Wayne Caldwell, et al. University of Guelph, The Monieson Centre, and The Ontario Rural Council, 2010. Available at:

<http://ruralontarioinstitute.ca/file.aspx?id=2f37acb1-638f-4bc3-959b-0c480be1b0b2>

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Resources:

- Rural Community Economic Development Programs and Resources. Available at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural>
- Land-use Planning Resources. Available at: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/index.html>

American Planning Association. Food Systems Planning and Community Health Research Center.

Available at: <http://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health/food.htm>

See American Planning Association publications:

4. Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning. Raja, Samina, et al. 2007.

5. A Planners Guide to Community and Regional Food Planning: Transforming Food Environments, Facilitating Health Eating. 2008.

Related Initiatives

- Stay tuned for the launch of the Farmland Trust's a Places to Grow *Food* Plan in April 2011. This will include a food systems "Blueprint" for Ontario, which provides planners and policymakers the opportunity to visualize food systems spatially and comprehensively, from primary food production through the entire cycle of processing, distribution, retail, consumption and waste recycling. What do these interactions look like within the landscape, and how do we plan for (and support) such a diverse range of agricultural activities? The Places to Grow *Food* Plan and Blueprint will be a great resource for municipalities across Ontario.
- The Ontario Professional Planners Institute will be releasing a Planning for Food "Call to Action" to its members in June 2011. The Call to Action grew out of OPPI's food and agriculture themed conference held last October.
- The Global Greenbelts Conference is being held in Toronto March 22-24, 2011.
- The Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee is currently preparing a comprehensive Food and Farming Strategy and Action Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. All stakeholders are encouraged to be involved in the process, and a draft document has been circulated for review and to generate feedback. The groundbreaking Strategy and Action Plan will be unveiled in Spring 2011.

List of Forum Participants

The following organizations and government bodies were represented at the *Renewing Rural Economies Forum*:

Non-Government Representation

Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Halton Region Federation of Agriculture
Huron County Federation of Agriculture
Peel Region Federation of Agriculture
Wellington Federation of Agriculture
York Region Federation of Agriculture
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
National Farmers Union
Durham Agricultural Action Committee
Greater Toronto Agricultural Action Committee
Holland Marsh Growers Association
FarmStart
Rural Ontario Institute
Agricultural Adaptation Council
Everdale Agri-Environmental Learning Centre
Toronto Food Policy Council
Food Link Grey Bruce
Food Partners Alliance - Simcoe County
Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association
University of Guelph – School of Environmental Design and Rural Development
University of Waterloo
Ontario Green Jobs Strategy
Miller Dickinson Blais
MMM Group

Provincial-Government-Level Representation

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – Land Use Planning Unit
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – Business Management Unit
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – Rural Community Development Unit
Ontario Ministry of Finance
Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Planning Innovation Section
Environmental Commissioner of Ontario
Municipal Property Assessment Corporation

Municipal Representation

Town of Blue Mountains
Bruce County
Town of Caledon
Region of Durham
Town of East Gwillimbury
Township of East Zorra-Tavistock
Town of Georgina
County of Grey
Municipality of Grey Highlands
County of Haldimand
Regional Municipality of Halton
Town of Halton Hills
City of Hamilton
County of Huron
Huron County Business Development Corporation
Town of Innisfil
City of Kawartha Lakes
Municipality of Leamington
Markdale Chamber of Commerce
Town of Markham
County of Middlesex
Township of Middlesex Centre
Town of Minto
Town of New Tecumseth
Niagara Region
Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
Norfolk County
Township of North Stormont
Northumberland County
Region of Peel
City of Pickering
Prince Edward County
City of Sarnia
County of Simcoe
Township of Southgate
Tiny Township
Region of Waterloo
Township of Wellington-North
Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures Development Corporation
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
Township of Woolwich

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Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Economic Developers Council of Ontario

Association of Municipalities of Ontario

Ontario Association of Community Futures Development Corporations

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