



## **Brighton Growth Management Strategy Search Conference Summary**

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**Prepared By**



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## **1.0 Project Background**

The ongoing Brighton Growth Management Strategy is designed to find consensus and offer direction on the amount, rate and form of growth that is desirable in the Municipality over the next twenty (20) years. The results of this work will be integrated into the Municipality of Brighton Official Plan in 2010.

The Municipality has established the Brighton Growth Management Advisory Committee to oversee this project. The Advisory Committee is comprised of Council Members and supported by municipal staff.

In November 2009, the Municipality of Brighton launched the public consultation phase of this work. Two Search Conferences were held, and plans have been put in place to hold a Community Forum, in order to solicit public opinion. This report summarizes findings from the two Search Conferences.

## 2.0 The Search Conferences

Two Search Conferences were held in the Municipality on November 13, 2009 at the new Community Centre in Brighton, and on November 16, 2009 at the Codrington Hall. The former was focused primarily on urban issues; the latter had a rural focus.

The Search Conferences were designed to provide an opportunity for participants to discuss the question of the most desirable rate, amount and form of growth that should be accommodated in the Municipality of Brighton over the longer term. It was anticipated that discussions would focus on issues such as new development, community sustainability, the creative economy, the green economy, farming and agriculture, the rural hamlets, the service and retail sectors, housing, heritage, natural conservation, downtown revitalization and community and recreational services.

The Search Conferences were held without precondition and participants were asked to share with others of varying perspective, interests and expertise in a collaborative dialogue designed to promote open and creative thinking.

The invitees were circulated a formal invitation, (**Appendix A: Search Conference Invitation**) as well as an electronic copy of the *Northumberland Growth Management Strategy Report: Municipality of Brighton Perspective*, and were asked to circulate to relevant staff members.

The invitees included:

- Council and staff
- County Council and staff
- MP's and MPP's
- School Boards and Educational Institutions
- Business and Community Organizations

- Agricultural Organizations
- Economic Development and Tourism Organizations
- Community and Environmental Organizations
- Public Safety Organizations

The invitee list was extended and revised in response to individual requests.

### **3.0 Proceedings & Organization**

Both the urban and rural focused Search Conferences took place over a 5-hour period and were organized in a consistent format. An introduction to the Growth Management Strategy was provided by Mr. Ken Hurford, Director of Planning and Development Services for the Municipality of Brighton. This was followed by a backgrounder on Provincial growth management by Ms. Heather Sadler of EcoVue Consulting.

David Goyette of EcoVue Consulting provided a summary of the objectives and agenda for the day, and engaged the participants in developing a list of issues that were deemed by them to be most relevant to a discussion of municipal growth. Each of these issues was then assigned to a table, and attendees selected a table, typically of 4 to 6 people, that was of relevance to them. Table spokespersons were selected, and group discussions proceeded with the assistance of EcoVue staff members as facilitators. Table discussions proceeded for approximately one hour, following which table spokespersons reported their trends, concerns and conclusions to the entire group.

Tables reconvened in the afternoon for a room-wide discussion on the key matters raised in the morning sessions. Its aim was to cross-pollinate ideas, and discover common ground. Occasional straw votes were taken to determine positions. The day closed with final statements by table spokespersons and any other person wishing to offer summary thoughts.

## **4.0 Search Conference Results**

### **4.1 Urban Focus**

The urban focused Search Conference was held on November 13, 2009 at the new Community Centre in Brighton. This Conference was attended by twenty-seven (27) participants organized into six tables. The group identified the following issues for table discussions:

1. Desirable Growth: Amount, Type and Location in the Brighton Urban Area and Impact on Infrastructure
2. Desirable Growth: Brighton Urban Area, Hamlets and Rural Areas
3. The Creative Economy
4. Community Services
5. Sustainability
6. Natural and Built Heritage and Conservation

Despite “Sustainability” being identified as an issue by the group, no participants sat at this table. When queried, the group response was that the notion of sustainability is well engrained in local thinking and that its interconnectedness with all other table issues would ensure its consideration.

### **4.2 Urban Trends**

- Shortage of affordable housing and variety in the housing stock (i.e. limited availability of small homes, condominiums, apartment buildings etc.) makes it difficult to age-in-place. Existing housing stock generally consists of single detached dwellings.
- Community Services need to be enhanced to provide for younger families and seniors, including schools, meeting places and active recreational opportunities such as soccer fields to

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encourage both groups to stay. Services should also include passive recreational opportunities such as walking trails, bicycle paths.

- Participants expressed a lack of communication and/or promotion of Brighton's existing services and encouraged such communication in order to promote awareness and participation.
- Long discussion on how to retain youth in the community with the conclusion that supporting and encouraging the arts (creative economy) and its subsidiary businesses could help to keep artistic youth in Brighton. Provisions for co-op placements as well as summer and year round work for students are required to keep youth in the area.
- Lack of widespread and affordable high-speed internet may limit growth of existing businesses and groups as well as the attraction of future businesses.
- General agreement to investigate differing types of 'soft' or creative industry and/or manufacturing to provide new employment.
- Policies which encourage home based businesses should remain and be improved.
- Agreement that signage along the 401 to attract travelers into the urban area is required.
- Consensus to adopt policy to promote hotels, motels and guest houses in support of tourism.
- Recommendations to develop a Natural Heritage Strategy to identify areas of local and regional significance to ensure they are protected in the future. In addition, create connectivity among these areas to ensure movement of flora and fauna, and to facilitate trail networks for human use and enjoyment.
- Proper protection of floodplains, wetlands and the shoreline of the former glacial Lake Iroquois (evident by ridge running east-west just north of the 401) light of future growth.
- Not enough heritage buildings within the Brighton urban area to develop heritage districts. However, preserving individual buildings is important and will help with tourism and Brighton's

image. Tax relief or other incentives for owners or improvers of heritage buildings should be considered.

- Development of waterfront and shoreline areas was briefly discussed; cautions were suggested regarding the maintenance of views and community access.
- Caution to proceed slowly with overall growth consistent with adequacy of infrastructure. Existing sewage treatment facility will cap off in about 10 years if growth continues at current rate. It has a capacity to serve approximately 1,600-1,700 more people.
- Agreement that increasing transit services in the area (shuttle buses to and from Presqu'île Park and into hamlet areas) as well as linkages to the GTA, perhaps through GO Transit, would attract differing age segments to the Brighton area and would also facilitate improved tourism.
- Lack of accessible public transit is an issue for many; so too is the need for safe bicycling routes into the urban area.
- A perspective that commercial development should be promoted over industrial development for employment creation, and as a means to discourage shopping and business in out-of-municipality locations such as Belleville or Campbellford.
- Room-wide consensus on maintaining the elements that currently define the positive image of the Municipality. (i.e. small town, family friendly atmosphere, opportunities to enjoy nature and rural areas) Participants agreed that they do not want these attributes lost in the pursuit of growth.

### **4.3 Rural Focus**

The rural focused Search Conference was held on November 16, 2009 at the Codrington Hall. This Conference was more intimate than the urban search conference with approximately sixteen (16) participants. It should be noted that several of the rural participants attended the urban search conference as well. The group concluded on the following issues for table discussions:

1. Agriculture and the Resource Economy
2. Municipal and Community Services
3. Future Growth and Viability in Hamlets; Limits to Growth, Severances & Lot Creation
4. Built and Natural Heritage; Water Resources, Green Energy & Sustainability

#### ***4.4 Rural Trends***

- Policies which support home businesses and occupation should be reviewed and enhanced to allow and encourage rural employment and commerce.
- Participants agreed that the rural areas depend on commercial areas in Brighton and would support the further growth of those areas.
- A review of the Municipality's severance policies, particularly the 3 in 10 year policy, should be considered. (Three rural residential severances within 10 years). No consensus was reached on whether this policy was too strict or not strict enough.
- Participants supported the idea of site sustainability in the site rehabilitation of gravel and sand pits, as well as forestry operations.
- Community centers such as Codrington Hall are the valued hubs of the rural communities. Provisions for their protection and enhancement were strongly supported.
- Improvements of recreational facilities and or conversion of existing recreational facilities (i.e. baseball diamonds into soccer pitches) should be considered. Recreational facilities are underutilized by Brighton residents; encouragement of sharing facilities would assist the urban-rural area divide.
- Blanket municipal servicing to all hamlets is not ideal as it is too costly. Consideration may occur if there is a health-related water supply or water quality concern. However, servicing into Smithfield due to its proximity to Brighton was open to consideration by the participants.

- Improved access to technologies such as the municipal web site, as well as education and training for its use, were brought forward under the notion of “virtual hamlets.” This was viewed as a means to better connect rural residents and as an encouragement of youth to remain within the communities.
- Participants agreed that hamlet boundaries are sufficient and did not require any changes.
- Concerns were raised over the existence of dug wells as opposed to drilled wells and the potential for drinking water contamination. The municipality should investigate policies in this area.
- Discussion took place on the disconnect between agencies (MOE, MNR, LTC etc.) and the difficulties that landowners have determining the responsibilities of agencies.
- Concerns regarding rural heritage buildings such as barns, which are being demolished at an alarming rate. Preservation of these buildings is crucial for rural image and possible tourism. Policy changes to support rural heritage buildings were strongly encouraged. The group supported the idea of encouraging adaptive re-use of these buildings, tax incentives, or a revolving fund to support rehabilitation.
- Investigate options for small scale manufacturing or light industry within the Hamlets as a means of ensuring their survival.
- Wind turbines should be permitted and the process should be streamlined to make it easier for residents to erect them.
- Participants were accepting of change; however, they cautioned that fundamental changes to the way of life in the hamlet and rural areas risks undermining the positive and desirable characteristics of these areas. In addition, the participants cautioned that blanket hamlet policies would not be supported; each hamlet is unique with its own issues and specific and specialized growth policies should be developed for each hamlet.

- Participants were in agreement that the Municipality needs to determine the number and location of all existing lots of records to accurately predict potential growth via such lots. Policies which restrict development on undersized or inappropriate lots of record should be considered.

## **5.0 Trends and Themes**

While the two Search Conferences were held in differing locations and had differing issues and focus, they did share some common trends and themes:

- 5.1 Participants have substantial care and passion for their Municipality. They place high value on its existing physical, cultural and social characteristics, and in particular, on perceptions of the benefits of small town and rural life.
- 5.2 There is a willingness to consider new growth within the Municipality, but it is strongly tempered by a reluctance to consider growth that undermines the most desirable characteristics of the current built form.
- 5.3 There is no momentum for a growth strategy that aggressively promotes a dramatic increase in the amount or rate of growth. A slow growth approach is preferred.
- 5.4 There is a consensus that any growth should be accompanied by the concomitant development or improvement of community services and community infrastructure.
- 5.5 There is an understanding that demographics can and should play a role in any further growth options, including the provision of housing and services for an aging population, and the provision of an improved variety in housing types and tenancies, in order to serve a varied demographic.
- 5.6 There is consensus that the hamlets are a feature of the Municipality that should be maintained and strengthened. This is not perceived to take place through the provision of municipal servicing, but through improvements in the provision of community services in existing central places such as community centres, churches and schools.

- 5.7 There is consensus that each of the hamlet communities should be viewed as unique, and that, to the extent possible, each should receive individual attention in any proposals for growth.
- 5.8 There is general agreement that employment growth is most likely to be driven by the service sector, the tourism sector, and the attraction of environmentally-acceptable light or non-traditional industry or manufacturing, particularly as part of the green economy.
- 5.9 There is support for growth that is derived from the creative economy, including the promotion of arts and culture, as well as a favourable regulatory environment for home based businesses.
- 5.10 There is recognition of and support for the role of tourism in generating economic growth. The improved use of signage at the Highway 401 interchange, as well as rural signage to promote scenic routes and heritage attractions are favoured as short-term means of improved tourism promotion.
- 5.11 The role of communication in support of a strategic agenda for growth is seen as an area for improvement. It is perceived that weak or inconsistent promotion of the current growth management work by the municipality requires attention. Active promotion of a more extensive and interactive web site is seen to be beneficial.

## 6.0 Summary

In the fall of 2009, The Municipality of Brighton's Growth Management Committee launched "*Brighton – Growing Together – Creating Our Future*" a public consultation program intended to inform the development of a Brighton Growth Management Strategy for the Municipality of Brighton and to find consensus on the amount and rate of growth that is desirable in the Municipality over the next 20 years. In November of 2009, two community-based Search Conferences were hosted by the Municipality of Brighton as the first step in a public consultation program. Invited participants were asked to share with others of varying perspective, interests and expertise in a collaborative dialogue designed to promote open and creative thinking. While the two Search Conferences were held in differing locations and had differing issues and focus, some common trends and themes were identified.

The next step in the consultation program will be a Public Forum, to be held in January. At the Public Forum, attendees will be invited to share their thoughts regarding growth and development within the municipality. Results from all public sessions will be incorporated into a program report and will form the basis for draft policies respecting growth and development in the new Official Plan. These policies will be designed to satisfy the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure requirement for completion of a Growth Plan Conformity Exercise by the Municipality.

