The Grey Highlands Lens:
DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING

OMAFRA Rural Symposium
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February 14th 2017
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DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING

The Premise: Community development project as part of our Rural Studies seminar

The Partnership: The University Of Guelph and The Grey Highlands Municipal Government (Sustainability Subcommittee)

The Project: Develop a community based tool that fosters strategic, transparent, sustainable decision making in Grey Highlands
Our First Task:

- Reviewed 5 frameworks
  - Community Assets
  - Community Capitals
  - Vibrant Communities
  - Sustainable Livelihood
  - Healthy Rural Lens

The Tool

- Combination of various frameworks
  - Modeled around *The Healthy Rural Lens*
    - Developed for decision makers
  - Informed by Community Capitals Framework
    - Developed to understand communities
Huron Lens (as visual example):

The Healthy Rural Lens Worksheet

Indicators of Success
Does the action:
- Support moderate and sustainable population growth
- Promote Huron as a great place to live, work and play
- Ensure Huron is a welcoming community for new residents
- Enhance opportunities for youth, families, seniors

- Support arts, culture, heritage
- Ensure Huron is affordable and accessible to all
- Encourage local training and learning opportunities
- Foster pride and sense of community

- Promote active and healthy lifestyle
- Support active transportation
- Ensure accessibility to excellent healthcare and wellness services

- Develop an accessible, efficient and integrated transportation network
- Ensure municipal transportation system is environmentally and economically feasible

- Preserve Huron's history and rural character
- Foster compact communities that address local needs
- Create long-term infrastructure plans
- Help mitigate the impacts of big box development

Natural Environment
- Protect natural heritage systems and support biodiversity
- Reduce toxic, waste and greenhouse gases
- Consider water quality and quantity

Economy
- Foster an energy conscious culture
- Exhibit municipal leadership in energy awareness
- Maximize energy conservation

Key Considerations
- How will this program or policy impact the community in 20 or even 40 years from now?
- Are there possible unintended consequences?
- Does it enhance service delivery?
- Do we have adequate human and financial resources to do this?
- Is it sustainable?
- Have we adequately engaged the community?
- Does this improve accessibility?
- Does this enhance fit with our unique Huron character?
- Who does this impact? Are we being inclusive?
- Are there barriers we haven’t considered?
- Are there previous experiences with this?

Example of a completed worksheet:

Name of policy/program you are considering:

How to complete the worksheet:
1. Title the worksheet with the program or policy that you are considering.
2. On the left side are the indicators of success for each of the Sustainable Huron Themes. Think about the impacts of your program or policy for each theme. Does it have a positive, neutral or negative impact on each theme?
3. Place a dot on the theme line in the negative, neutral or positive area. Join the dots on each theme line and the resulting shape should help you see an overall perspective of how the program or policy will impact our community.
4. Below are several Key Considerations. Consider your program or policy in light of these factors and identify components that require additional research or community engagement or collaboration.
Step 1: Contextual Analysis

- Building our own familiarity with Grey Highlands (as outsiders)
- Reviewing Municipal Documents: BR+E, Community Profile, Strategic Plan, From Need to Innovation, Cultural Assets List, etc.
Step 2: Key Informant Interviews

- We conducted 12 interviews with community members

- We asked each key informant about assets in their individual communities and community identity.

- We also asked participants for any ‘words of wisdom’ pertaining to their communities that would help us when we actually entered into these communities to collect further data.
Step 3: Focus Groups

At these focus groups, we asked one simple open-ended question: What are the assets in your community and in Grey Highlands as a whole?
While we were in GH, we did some sightseeing!

And we definitely enjoyed our stay!
... the result? Our (Draft) Themes!

Our Draft Themes

- Business and Industry
- Infrastructure and Built Capital
- Political Support and Political Capital
- Agriculture
- People
- Community
- Natural Environment
- Historical values/Significance
- Culture
- Tourism
- Industry and Built Capital
Survey

1) Verification and prioritization of themes, open ended questions as an opportunity to collect missing assets, demographic information

2) Integrate survey data with our draft framework
Our take-aways so far...
Thank you for listening!

Any Questions?