

# A PLACE TO GROW



# GREY HIGHLANDS

**AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
PROPOSAL  
FROM**



**The Chamber of Commerce  
Grey Highlands**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GREY HIGHLANDS

In the past four years there have been important studies and documents prepared:

Municipality of Grey Highlands Strategic Plan 2013 to 2018.

Business Sector, Business Retention and Expansion Plan (BR+E) for Grey Highlands.

Agricultural Business Retention and Expansion Plan (ABR+E) for Grey Highlands.

These three documents have been the Chamber's inspiration for creating our attached Proposal. It is our belief that the Proposal will help existing businesses and farmers flourish in the future and greatly improve the local business climate.

We also believe the Proposal is necessary to sustain and grow the economic potential of Grey Highlands; more jobs, more residents and more revenue.

We look forward to your comments on our Economic Development Proposal.

Doug Crawford, President  
Chamber of Commerce  
Grey Highlands

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**WHAT IS IT THAT EVERYONE HAS IN COMMON?**

**FROM BABIES TO ADULTS?  
FROM URBAN TO RURAL AREAS?**

**FOOD!**

The purpose of this Proposal is to make a compelling case for the Chamber's Concept to be a valuable economic asset for Grey Highlands and area by connecting people (residents, consumers and tourists) to our economic growth, which will benefit everyone.

This plan outlines a potential framework for undertaking and managing a variety of residential housing, community based farming and related food systems in a manner that is economically feasible, ecologically sound and provides lasting social value to the community and its residences.

Our proposal is to apply development models that have been successful in Canada and the United States, modified to work within our communities.

# INTRODUCTION

Rural Ontario Municipalities are facing increasing challenges such as:

- Reduced Provincial and Federal funding
- Slow growth resulting in limited increases to the Municipal tax base
- Increasing infrastructure costs
- Declining job markets
- Increasing size of the aging population
- Attracting tourist visitation and spending
- Loss of youth participating in agricultural based business
- Loss of youth to urban centers

The economic development area we refer to in this proposal begins in the Municipalities of Grey Highlands and West Grey, but will lead to encompassing the surrounding Municipalities of Chatsworth and Southgate. This area has a very strong agricultural base with an increasingly strong foothold in the local food movement, thanks to successful initiatives such as Chef's Forum and Foodlink.

## VISION

To build a community where everyone, young and old, can live, work and play. A community that enhances life and provides opportunities to flourish with the comforts of safe modern living and maintains its rich agricultural base, natural surroundings and history. The potential for expansion is unlimited.

# PROPOSAL BREAKDOWN

## A) Develop a Livable Community for all Ages

**Livable Communities** have to provide meaning to people's lives beyond just being a point of residence.

A **Livable Community** is one that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community features, and adequate mobility services. Together these services provide personal independence and the engagement of residents in civic and social life.

### i. The Village

The Village will be designed for people and walking not for cars and driving. The village will be sensitive to the needs of all residents, from active seniors looking to downsize to people seeking more affordable housing for their families. Housing styles will include Single-Family Homes, Twin Housing (Semis), Town Homes and Condo style 3 Story Buildings.

The Village will have parklands, water features, walking and bike paths, golf course, curling rink, tennis courts and winter activities.

In addition, the Village will have a community meeting place, "The Barn". This facility will have a swimming pool, exercise room, central gathering room and community gardens for all residents to enjoy.

## ii. The Market Place and Public Plaza



This area will be designed as a flexible multi-purpose space. The main draw will be the indoor/outdoor **Farmer's Market**. The outdoor area will be flexible in nature to accommodate an outdoor entertainment area which could be used for concerts, theatre presentations, holiday events, farm based competitions and even outdoor movie nights.

## iii. The Market Square



R. McNAUGHTON

This area can include shops such as: Artisan spaces; Galleries; Restaurants; Coffee Shop(s); an Ice Cream Parlor; Pub(s); Bakery; Butchery; Bank(s) etc. Above the shopping area there will be office spaces and work lofts available.

The Market Square will be a gathering place for visitors, friends and tourists to meet, shop, enjoy a meal, buy farm fresh food, enjoy local art and be part of a new and exciting lifestyle experience.

This will be the area for building key relationships between the farming community, the visitors and the people living in **Grey Highlands** and surrounding areas.

**The Market Place, The Public Plaza** and **The Market Square** will be within walking distance of **The Village**.

**Question:** Where can this concept be developed?

**Answer:** There are 144 acres of land on the Northern edge of Markdale, owned by The Markdale Golf and Curling Club.

The Club would like to see this acreage developed. This land extends from the existing Golf Course and Curling Club right up the edge of Highway 10, and north to the Rocky Saugeen River.

## **B) Community Based Micro Farming**



**“We need young Farmers, we need new Farmers, and we need more Farmers”.**

Across from The Market Place on Highway 10, is a substantial portion of land which we envision becoming community based Micro farms of 1 to 3 acre parcels, farm homesteads and communal buildings for shared storage and equipment.

The Chamber is aware that this property is part of the Municipality of West Grey. This proposal will enable both Municipalities to work together on a **Public, Private, Partnership** (P3) project for the greater good of Grey County.

**FARMSTART** supports a new generation of farmers. Their objective is to encourage and support a new generation of entrepreneurial ecological farmers. Our concept would be a perfect fit for the **FARMSTART** Project!

**Farmstart** goals are:

- i) Aim to help make the road to farming a little more accessible, a little less risky and a little less lonely.
- ii) Encourage many to explore their new farm dreams and help more serious prospective farmers plan their new steps into agriculture.
- iii) Connect new farmers with training, resources and mentors as well as land assets and peers that help them to not only get their farm business off the ground, but thrive.
- iv) Provide start-up farms, seed capital and flexible training and skills building opportunities as well as important connections to peers, mentors and community networks.
- v) Believe new farmers need to be resourceful, smart and hard working if they are going to succeed.

Our proposal will make it possible for new farmers to get into the agricultural business more affordably.

## **SWIFT TECHNOLOGY**

Grey County and the South Western Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) project are actively working on bringing high-speed internet access into our area. This will help make the community based micro farms state of the art with the new farming technologies available.

## **C) Education and Food Processing Development Centre**

Parts A & B will draw people into the area who are interested in all aspects of the food industry.

### **i. Education**

There could be satellite campuses from the University of Guelph and/or Georgian College for hands on learning in Agriculture, Veterinary, Culinary, and Tourism services.

These facilities could be sited anywhere within Grey Highlands or the surrounding Municipalities mentioned in our introduction. If facilities are not situated within walking distance of the Village and Market Place, it could introduce a need for transportation services, which would again enhance our economy.

### **ii. Food Processing Development Centre**

The set up of a food processing and incubation facility would provide the added value for local food production.

We believe that developing Facilities to assist with the start-up of new food businesses makes good business sense. Creating a centre which provides space and programs would help manage the transition for new and existing product ideas. New and existing businesses would have the resources to assist in the graduation and establishment of their own production right here in Grey Highlands for things such as commercialization, market launch, and growth in sales!

In addition, the Facilities would provide a centre of excellence that will assist new and established food manufacturers and retailers in product development, refinement, testing, and manufacturing of market entry product volumes.

**“We can grow our own Artisan Food Industry!”**

## **D) Agri-tourism**

In simple terms Agri-tourism is the crossroads of tourism and agriculture; where the public visits working farms or Farmers Market to buy products, participate in activities, learn about farming, enjoy entertainment, shop country stores, and eat a meal.

People want a new experience - an escape from the stress of the city. Parents want their children to know how food is grown and that milk actually comes from a cow! Families enjoy a drive to the country and spending time together. Agri-tourism rekindles the positive emotions from these family visits.

According to a recent family survey:

- i.** Tourists are increasingly travelling by car.
- ii.** Tourists are taking shorter trips and planning at the last minute.
- iii.** Tourists are looking for new experiences as part of their trips.
- iv.** Families want to strengthen their relationships by being together.

Tourism is big business in Ontario that according to Government statistics brings in over \$20 Billion annually, and supports over 300,000 jobs!

We believe that healthy agriculture is the very foundation for a successful local economy and a resourceful tool for community development.

We would like **Grey Highlands** to be the **Nexus** of Agri-tourism in Ontario.

**...A MUST PLACE TO  
VISIT!**

## **E) Future Growth**

The spinoff of industry, service, retail, recreation, and other residential developments is exponential with the expected draw of people to our community.

Other potential facilities along Highway 10 corridor could be:

- i.**Hotel/Inn
- ii.**Transportation services between communities which has the potential of having provincial gas tax assistance
- iii.**Health and Wellness Centre
- iv.**Assisted Living Facility
- v.**New Grey Highlands Municipal Complex office, Fire Hall and OPP Detachment
- vi.**Revitalization of the downtown core to expand existing businesses and attract new businesses
- vii.**New or expanded places of worship

Grey County is actively working on improving the Technology Infrastructure in our area. This again adds to the support and development of our proposal within Grey Highlands.

Finally, the success of this model could then be applied to other areas within Grey Highlands and the surrounding municipalities.

For example: using this same principal to develop a community within the Flesherton area which focuses on the Arts, complete with a Performance Theatre, Conservatory, Art Schools, and the like.

# How the plan aligns with the Grey Highlands Strategic Plan

The following references the pages in the Grey Highlands Strategic Plan:

## **Pg. 11 Sustainable and Principled Growth.**

**GHCC Response:** Our plan works with the strengths that Grey Highlands already has to offer. Our concept would be a focusing point, making Grey Highlands a desirable place to not only visit but also live, by having a strong tourism base balanced by the livable community.

## **Pg. 14 - Strategic Priority: Communications. 1.2 – Develop and deliver a renewed marketing and branding approach through community engagement.**

**GHCC Response:** The plan is to present our proposal to the community in three separate town hall meetings. Showcasing this proposal could help start the rebranding of Grey Highlands. Our community could be an exciting place to live, work and play, as well as be a place to educate, grow, process and sell food locally.

## **Pg. 17 - Strategic Priority: Community and Economic Development. 2.2 – Capitalizing on Grey Highlands’ location advantage.**

**GHCC Response:** The Strategic Plan refers to “re branding” several times. This project offers a head on approach to that concept. Creating this community within a community would give us the ability to brand and market ourselves to all of Ontario, drawing increased tourism traffic, migration, and growth. Following through with the education aspects of this plan we would build a hub of locally minded agricultural people the like of which Ontario does not have.

## **Pg. 18 - Strategic Priority: Community and Economic Development. 2.3 – Promoting local commercial industrial and**

**retail growth and sustainability. "Position locally owned and operated businesses as regionally competitive".**

**GHCC Response:** By building the market place aspect of our plan we would be granting our local retailers and farmers a unique destination based venue to sell their products.

**Pg. 18 - Strategic Priority: Community and Economic Development. 2.4 - Developing tourism potential. "Grey Highlands will be a destination of choice through the strength of its local and natural heritage" and "Integrate tourism development activities into economic development opportunities".**

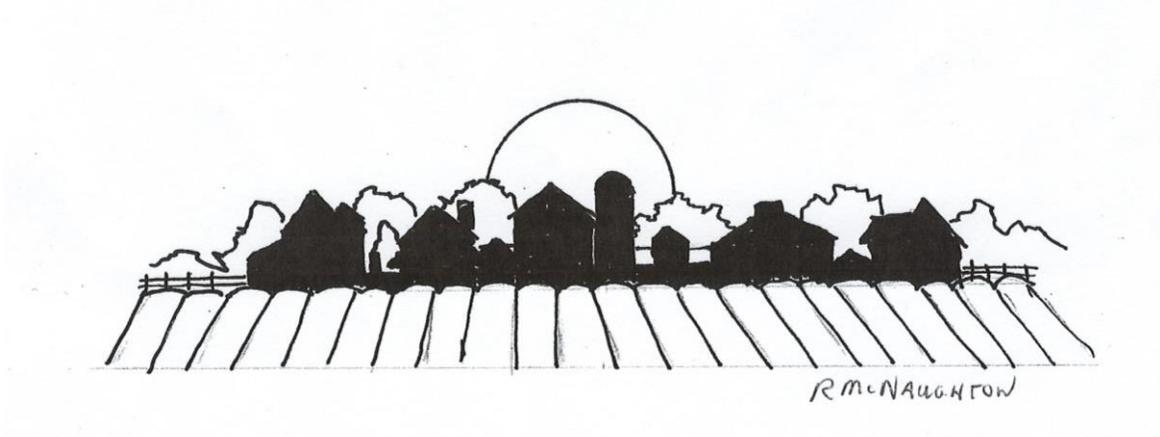
**GHCC Response:** Our Proposal clearly aligns with This Section of the Strategic Plan.

**Pg. 21 - 3.3 Meeting the needs of both current and future citizens "Promote mixed residential development and mixed housing solutions".**

**GHCC Response:** Our plan includes both adult and young families affordable living accommodations for current and future residents.

As you can see the economic development proposal from the Chamber of Commerce clearly meets a large portion of the Grey Highlands Strategic Plan. As such the support of our plan should be of great importance to the current and future councils as a way of moving Grey Highlands forward in terms of growth and prosperity.

# Where do we go from here?



We all have ideas that we feel will make our Community better. If we were a visitor today to our community, would we come away with the feeling that this place is where people are ready to embrace growth and economic development?

As a starting point it is our plan to present a proposal that is transportable and useable to all who may be interested in future development in Grey Highlands.

Our proposal would help to raise awareness that Grey Highlands is ready and prepared to step into the future.

Imagine what St. Jacobs, Niagara on the Lake, Prince Edward County, Elliott Lake, and The Brickworks in Toronto did for their communities. All these places have been revitalized with a little creativity and initiative.

The key to making this idea happen is finding the right **Supporters, Investors, and Developers!**

**Let's work together to grow our community!**

**....A PLACE TO  
GROW!**

**...PEOPLE, PLACE  
&  
PRODUCT...**

# Sources

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- \* Consumer Insight Research (February 22, 2013)
  - RT07 - Bruce Grey Simcoe
- \* [farmstart.ca](http://farmstart.ca)
  - Supporting a new Generation of Farmers