

TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP SESSION
ST. JACOBS FIRE HALL
JUNE 16TH, 2011

Residents of St. Jacobs, Floradale, Heidelberg and the surrounding area participated in a community focus group session to identify **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)** facing the Township and the community at large.

The following **strengths** were identified:

- Location, proximity to urban (KW, Toronto, airport)
- Strong economic base (tourism, manufacturing, agricultural and retail)
- Recreational facilities
- Trails and tourism structures
- Firm planning policies and countryside line
- Fire service (new Breslau Sub-station)
- Vital downtown core in Elmira
- Community involvement, 'barn builders'
- Work ethic
- Size of Township staff numbers allows for good/close interaction with residents
- Snow removal
- Tightly networked community/volunteerism
- Bridge tourism

The following **weaknesses** were identified:

- Traffic and congestion
 - o Use of gravel roads as through-ways
- Buy-in for collective marketing
- No BIA in St. Jacobs
- Gravel pits – managing aggregate
- Distance between settlements, Breslau far away
- New residents not connected to the Township
 - o Shop outside the Township
- Hwy 6 and multiple lights

The following **opportunities** were highlighted:

- Location of urban areas, economic development opportunities
- Green energy
- Tourism (unified strategy)
- Buy local, buy fresh strategy
 - o Branding and marketing
- Connecting communities together (Elmira-Conestogo), via buses, shuttles
- Transit (bus)
- Existing tourist train to enhance LRT transit
- Bike depots, Car Share
- Buggy/bike lanes and rails with trails
- Transit opportunities to the airport
- Industrial expansion around the airport
- Draw businesses into Woolwich (Quarry example)

- GO Train, bridge over Grand River
- Urban intensification in Elmira
- Demographic changes and accommodations
- Branding as an agricultural Township
- Bypass in Elmira
- Festivals in other communities draws people in
- Rain water cisterns/rebate program
- Welcoming new residents; outline expectations upfront
- Alternative construction methods; be flexible
- Bridge brings tourists
- All year round hockey rink

The following **threats** were highlighted:

- Traffic threat to Old Order Mennonites and cyclists
- Exodus of Mennonites
- Restrictions on Mennonite farms
 - o Shop size, employee, business has to have less revenue than farming
- Green energy threat to farm land
- Gravel pits
 - o Traffic, loss of farmland, length of pit times
- Encroachment from KW & Guelph
- Over expansion
- Growth threat to transportation and equipment transportation
- Truck traffic in Elmira
- ATV/dirt bikes on trails

There was a discussion about what residents like most about Woolwich, what they like least and what they feel the priorities the strategic plan should focus on.

Items that they like **most** about Woolwich:

- Quality of life in rural atmosphere
- Bike lanes on regional roads
- Recreational programming
- Benefit of proximity to recreational programs in KW
- Cultural facilities close
- Many parks, ball diamonds

The factors that they like **least** about Woolwich:

- Light standards in subdivisions
- Transportation network; alternative methods
- Urban subdivisions in rural area
- Not a lot of parkland in West Montrose
- Staff inexperience with farming business

The following **top priorities** were identified:

- Balance education with experience when recruiting
 - o Common sense relating to policies
- Road maintenance improved
- Preservation of agricultural community

- Long term vision/plan re: official plan, growth management
- Commitment to agriculture
- Agricultural advisory committee for farm concerns
- Facilitate/provide resources for organizations with strategic priorities
 - o Provide leadership
- GRT Route 21
- Infrastructure development
 - o Traffic from KW to Elmira (85)
- LRT into stockyards
- Branding Woolwich – economic prosperity
- Identifying growth areas
 - o Growth projection
- Protecting meeting places like schools/stores
- Keeping Old Order Mennonites in Community
- Balancing heritage preservation with resources
- Green space – passive/recreational in urban and rural
- Maintaining green and brown space (tree planting)
- Actively look for senior level funding/grants
- Revenue generation models
- Partnerships with community groups/businesses
- Use of finite resources (water)