



BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

**Saugeen Shores Business Retention and Expansion Survey Results  
May 2012**



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## Background on the BR+E Project

The Town of Saugeen Shores is pleased to announce the results of the Business Retention and Expansion Project (BR+E). This project was a joint effort between The Town of Saugeen Shores, The Business Enterprise Centre of Saugeen Shores, The Saugeen Shores Chamber of Commerce, Saugeen Sustainability Volunteer and Resource Centre, and the Four County Labour Market Planning Board (the Partners). Funding was provided by the Partners and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs through its RED program.

The Partners chose to pursue the BR+E project to obtain a clear picture of the business community's requirements and needs with the goal to ascertain if the municipality could support their growth. Some of the known challenges faced by business are:

- The population dramatically increases with the influx of summer residents and visitors, but only for the few months of summer.
- Efforts towards promoting the area as a four season destination for tourists are difficult due to uneven weather patterns (lack of snow), frequent extreme weather road closures, and a lack of major winter attractions.
- There is a decrease in farming employment, due to automation and the loss of some farmland to development.

High household income is one of the Town's major advantages. Saugeen Shores boasts an average household income that is 33% higher than the national average. This income level is due to the wages of Bruce Power, Ontario's largest electrical supplier. The success of Bruce Power and its high wages make it difficult for smaller local companies to find and retain employees. Further, with the influx of summer residences and the purchasing power of Bruce Power workers, there is also a concern that affordable housing is becoming a serious issue for the minimum wage earners that provide the services that we all need.

Additionally, while Bruce Power is an asset to the community, there is a concern that Saugeen Shores may become a one industry town. The local economy, if it does not diversify, will be tied to the plant's sustainability. In the past, when the plant has not done well, the area's economy becomes depressed, unemployment rises, the housing market plummets, and stores close. Conversely, when the plant is in a growth phase, the economy, unemployment, housing prices and local stores all benefit. The town's small businesses and quaint atmosphere makes visitors want to come and future residents want to stay. The success of the existing small businesses will make for a more prosperous and diverse economic base.

The BR+E is designed to ensure that the small businesses have a means of communicating with the Town. Before this BR+E, the Town did not have a formal dialogue with the business community. But through this project, 86 businesses owners have been heard. They not only have provided the Town with a new understanding of the issues facing local businesses, but in many instances provided practical suggestions on how to make improvements.

## BR+E Project Overview

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs coordinates the Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) program to help rural communities strengthen their economies by helping to identify actions that will assist local businesses retain existing jobs and create new ones. It opens lines of communication between key partners. The core of the program is an in-depth survey that is completed in an interview manner, with two volunteer visitors meeting with the business owner. One volunteer asks the questions and probes for clarification, while the other records the responses.

### The BR+E Survey

There are 115 General questions that all businesses answer. These questions were broken down into sections which are: Business Climate (10 questions), Future Plans (18), Company Information (16), Business Development (22), Business Development –Markets (12), Business Development –Financial (4), Workforce Development (20), Local Community (15), Saugeen Shores Community Questions (15) There are also four sector specific surveys that only the relevant businesses completed: Retail, Tourism, Manufacturing, and Farm/Agriculture.

The Leadership Team decided to incorporate more of the owners’ quotes into the survey to provide qualitative insight. Due to time constraints of each interview, positive ratings were not probed as much as the negative rates. Further the dissatisfied were more inclined to share their experiences than those who were more content; therefore the quotes were not always a true representation of the quantitative data.

Time to conduct a survey varied between 1-3 hours, average of 2.

### Statistical Confidence

With a total of 842 businesses in the business directory, 86 Businesses across all sectors were randomly selected, giving us a 95% confidence with a +/- 10% margin of error. The businesses were selected from the following North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) categories, with the appropriate representation of each.

NAICS categories of Surveyed Businesses	#	%
Retail trade (motor vehicle, furniture, etc.)	12	14%
Retail trade (sporting goods, books, music)	5	6%
Accommodation and food services	14	16%
Professional, scientific & technical services	10	12%
Construction	8	9%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	6	7%
Finance and insurance	6	7%
Other services (except public administration)	6	7%

NAICS categories of Surveyed Businesses	#	%
Real estate and rental and leasing	5	6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	4	5%
Manufacturing(food, beverage)	3	3%
Health care and social assistance	2	2%
Manufacturing (wood, paper)	2	2%
Transportation and warehousing	1	1%
Information and cultural industries	1	1%
Administrative/Waste Mgmt/Remediation	1	1%

### Assisting Businesses

Part of the BR+E process was to allow business owners to request information or assistance on a variety of subject matter, including business planning, financial planning market research, the Save On Energy program and succession planning. As a result the project team handled 265 requests from 45 businesses (52%). Also, they sent out information on the Provincial Accessibility Standards for Customer Service to 40 businesses (47%).

## Business Community Overview

From the results of our survey, we can summarise our business community with the following characteristics. The majority of the Businesses in Saugeen Shores are small (68% have less than 10 employees), with a high degree of involvement by the owners, who live in town. Their primary markets are the local area and then the rest of Ontario. At the time of this survey, they have a positive outlook, with expectations that sales will increase next year and have plans to hire more employees over the next three years.

### Business Structures

The 86 businesses were broken down in to the following legal structures

- Incorporated - 60%
- Sole-proprietor – 29%
- Partnership - 6%
- Not for Profit - 2%
- Cooperative - 1%
- no response - 2%
- 10% are Franchises

### Business Premises

- 20% were home based businesses (provincial average is 23%)

Of the 80% of non-home-based:

- 59% own their premises
- 41% lease their premises

### Years of Operations

Years of Operations	Saugeen Shores	Provincial Average
Operating for 10 years or less	34%	36%
Operating between 11 and 35 years	42%	40%
Operating for 36 years or more	24%	24%

### Owner Involvement

Owner Descriptions	percent
Owners involved in day to day	95%
Owner lives in Saugeen Shores	87%
Head office is in Saugeen Shores	79%
Family Owned	65%

### Number of Employees

# of Employees	% of business
Owner	19%
1 - 4	23%
5 - 9	26%
10 – 14	10%
15 – 19	7%

# of Employees	% of business
20 – 29	6%
30 – 49	6%
50 – 99	2%
100 – 299	1%
300 or more	0%

**Where Employees Live**

<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Saugeen Shores	82%
Outside Saugeen Shores but within Bruce	10%
Outside Bruce County	3%

**Permanent Full Time Employees by BR+E Industries = 435**

<i>Industry</i>	<i># of Employees</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Retail	133	31%
Construction	86	20%
Accommodation and Food	62	14%
Finance and Insurance	46	11%
Manufacturing (food, beverage)	18	4%
Manufacturing (Wood, paper)	17	4%
Transportation and Warehousing	13	3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical	13	3%
Other Services (except Public Admin)	12	3%
Agriculture	11	3%
Real Estate	7	2%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	7	2%
Media	6	1%
Health care and Social Assistance	4	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>100</b>

**Market Characteristics**

<i>Global Markets</i>	<i>of Total Sales</i>	<i>Canadian Market</i>	<i>of Total Sales</i>
Within Canada	95%	Within the area	65%
Within the US	4%	Outside the area/ within Ontario	33%
Europe	1%	Outside Ontario/ within Canada	2%

**Sales Trends**

<i>Expectations for next year's total dollar sales compared to last?</i>			
• Higher 64%	• Lower 11%	• Same 21%	• Not sure 5%

**Hiring Trends**

<i>Number of Employees over</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Decrease</i>	<i>Remain the Same</i>
Past 3 Years	23	15	47
Next 3 Years	39	3	41

## Action Plans

One of the goals the Partners wanted to reach through this project was to create a more welcoming environment for business. From the results of the survey, it is clear that the business owners of Saugeen Shores are doing an excellent job of promoting their town. With a whopping 75 percent of the survey business rating the Town’s quality of life as “Excellent”, it is clear that they love their community. This is more impressive when compared to the provincial average of only 48 percent. This high quality of life was also the number one response to the question “List three of the community’s advantages as a place to do business” (LC6. High average household income, and natural geography ranked 2 and 3.)

LC9 Quality of Life	Saugeen Shores	Provincial Average
Excellent	75%	48%
Good	24%	43%
Fair	1%	7%
Poor	0%	2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

This positivity is carried across into the business climate with 35 percent of surveyed owners rating the “general impression of this community as a place to do business” as “Excellent”, beating the provincial average of 22.

BC1 Business Climate	Saugeen Shores	Provincial Average
Excellent	35%	22%
Good	43%	54%
Fair	20%	20%
Poor	2%	4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

These positive sentiments are the foundation of the strength of our economy. Our business community are working hard because they want to live in Saugeen Shores, including the owners who participated in this survey. They volunteered their time, and shared their thoughts and opinions as a means to help improve the community that they call home.

The Action Plan and Recommendations found in this report are meant to address some of the key concerns of local businesses. Some of the changes are recommended to take place at the municipal office. Others will require the involvement of the business community. It took a collaborative effort to produce this report. It will take the same effort to build upon the momentum established by the BR+E.

The Task Force spent 2 weeks reviewing the BR+E Summary Report. They then met and identified 24 key issues, which were grouped into 8 Action Plans. The Task Force also identified 7 items that focus on improving communication.

The Task Force hopes that as this report is put into action, and improvements are made, more local businesses will come forward and participate in the conversation about how to continue to make Saugeen Shores an excellent place to do business. With a healthier business climate and happier owners, more new businesses will be encouraged to open their doors to Saugeen Shores.

## Issue #1 – Municipality to be More Involved with Economic Development (ED)

### Supporting Data

- 23% sited lack of proactive new business recruitment as a barrier (BC4)
- 15% sited Economic Development as their recommendation to improve the business climate. It was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest suggestion. (BC6)
- 9% cited Economic Development as the issue that has the greatest impact on the growth of their own business. Highest ranked issue (BC8)
- Only 14% knew that the Town does not have an ED plan (LC4)
- Only 34% of businesses believe the Town takes an adequate role in ED (LC5)
- 78% agreed that their business would benefit from an ED position created at the Town Level (CQ15)
- 28% cited the Municipal Government as a disadvantage for the town as a place to do business. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest listed disadvantage (LC7)

### Objective 1: Ensure Municipal Staff are addressing Economic Development Issues

**Action 1:** Appoint a staff member to become the Point-of-Contact for Economic Development issues

*Lead:* CAO  
*Partner:* None  
*Funding:* None  
*Timeline:* ASAP

**Action 2:** Identify funding to create an Economic Development Plan

*Lead:* CAO or Point-of-Contact  
*Partner:* SS BEC, SS Chamber, Southampton Business Group, Port Elgin BIA  
*Funding:* SWEA, FedDev, BCFDC, Industry Canada, OMAFRA  
*Timeline:* after appointing the Point-Of-Contact

### Objective 2: Create an Economic Development (ED) Standing Advisory Committee

**Action 1:** Approach Council to create an Economic Development (ED) Standing Advisory Committee

*Lead:* CAO or Delegate  
*Partner:* BR+E Partners  
*Funding:* none  
*Timeline:* as soon as this action report is accepted by Council

### Objective 3: Create an Economic Development Plan

*Lead:* the Economic Development Officer/Point of Contact  
*Partner:* Town, SS BEC, SS Chamber, Southampton Business Group, Port Elgin BIA  
*Funding:* depending on findings of Objective 1, Action 2  
*Timeline:* will depend on approval of Objectives 1 and 2

### Objective 4: Investigate the need for an Economic Development Position in the Town of Saugeen Shores

**Action 1:** Define role, responsibility and time requirements of the possible new position

*Lead:* CAO / Point of Contact  
*Partner:* SS BEC, SS Chamber, Southampton Business Group, Port Elgin BIA  
*Funding:* none  
*Timeline:* 2012

## Issue #2 – Municipality to Improve Customer Service to Business Owners and Reduce Red Tape

### Supporting Data

- 26% cited the Approval Process as a barrier to business (6<sup>th</sup> highest barrier in BC4)
- While 63% were Very or Somewhat Satisfied with the Planning Department, 23% of these made comment on the need to improve the approval process
- 10% cite Municipal Support and 9% cited Reducing Red Tape as their recommendation to improve the business climate (BC6). These were the 4th and 5th highest rank issues
- 6% cited Municipal Support and another 6% cited Reducing Red Tape as issues that have the greatest issue on the growth of their business (BC8). These were the 3rd and 4th highest ranking issues
- 50% said Excellent or Good while 28% said Fair, and 22% responded Poor when rating the Permit Process as a factor for doing business (LC9)

### Objective 1 – Increase level of Customer Services at the Town Hall

**Action 1:** Assign staff to start documenting Permit Approval processes, including when process leads to other levels of government agencies

*Lead:* Point of Contact / CAO

*Partner:* none

*Funding:* none

*Timeline:* ASAP

**Action 2:** CAO to assign one person to be front line person to explain the process to enquiring Businesses

*Lead:* Point of Contact / CAO

*Timeline:* ASAP

*Recommendation* – create a Process Tracking System so that front line staff will know the exact stage of each application at the moment of enquiry (a simple spreadsheet or database with checkboxes and date boxes)

**Action 3:** Create a Process Checklist for enquiring businesses. This should include the names of government agencies that are part of the process, and maybe include timeline estimation

*Lead:* Point of Contact

*Timeline:* As soon as the processes are documented

**Action 4:** Town to post Checklist on newly designed website.

*Lead:* Point of Contact

*Timeline:* As soon as the Checklist is written

### Objective 2 – Align Municipal processes to meet the business needs where possible

**Action 1:** Staff to to simplify and streamline overall processes

*Lead:* Point of Contact / the Economic Development Officer, if the position is actualised

*Timeline:* on going

**Action 2:** Town to engage other levels of government to find ways to share information so business owners do not repeat themselves in multiple forms for the same issue

*Lead:* Point of Contact

*Timeline:* on going

### Issue #3 – Improve the Downtowns Vitality (both Southampton and Port Elgin)

#### Supporting Data

For all businesses

- 38% said “Fair” and 25 % said Poor to the condition of Downtown Revitalisation (CQ12)
- 26% said “Fair” and 35% said “Poor” to the condition of the Exterior Appearance of Facades (CQ9)
- 42% said “Fair” and 14% said “Poor” to the condition of Number of Vacancies/Turnovers (CQ11)
- 7% sited Downtown Revitalisation as a means of improving Business Climate (7<sup>th</sup> highest recommendation (BC6)
- 7% cited Downtown Revitalisation as an additional comment about doing business in this community (LC8)

For retail businesses

- The “Top Three Suggestions for improving the retail business environment” were improved streetscape (38%), Focused Downtown revitalisation strategy (38%) and Improved Parking (38%) (RB7)
- 58% of retailers wanted Physical Improvements in Public Area (RB6)
- 52% of retailers wanted Building Improvements Loan/Grant Programs (RB6)

#### Objective 1 - Improve Street Scope

**Action 1:** Promote the façade guidelines for both Port Elgin and Southampton to downtown businesses

*Lead:* Point of contact / CAO  
*Partners:* BIA, Chamber of Commerce, BCFDC  
*Funding:* Council Budget, BIA levy,  
*Timeline:* ASAP

**Action 2:** Develop grant/loan assistance program

*Lead:* Point of Contact  
*Partners:* BIA, Chamber of Commerce, BCFDC  
*Funding:* Council Budget, BIA levy, Tax Increment Equivalent Grant  
*Timeline:* 2012 – 2017

#### Objective 2 – Improve Communication and Coordination amongst all Downtowns Stakeholders

**Action 1:** Approach all agencies to create a collective communication strategy to ensure local businesses are aware of the need and efforts of the Downtowns Revitalisation

*Lead:* Point of Contact  
*Partners:* BIA, Chamber of Commerce, Southampton Business Group, Town, Bruce County  
*Timeline:* 2012

**Action 2:** Solicit volunteers to participate with improvement activities (admin, events, promotions etc.)

*Lead:* Point of Contact  
*Partners:* Port Elgin BIA, Chamber of Commerce, Southampton Business Group,  
*Timeline:* 2012

**Action 3:** Improve collaboration between Southampton and Port Elgin Businesses

*Lead:* Chamber of Commerce  
*Partners:* Port Elgin BIA, Southampton Business Group, SS BEC  
*Timeline:* 2012

**Action 4:** Pool Resources by inviting Southampton businesses to participate with the Port Elgin BIA, and invite BIA to participate with Southampton Business Group

*Lead:* Chamber of Commerce, Port Elgin BIA, Southampton Business Group

*Partners:* SS BEC

*Timeline:* 2012

Recommendation: BR+E Partners need to focus their effort to ensure that landlords are part of Revitalisation. The Partners could host workshops on this issue, or an open information forum on the rules and regulations concerning landlord versus tenant control of premise, with the emphasis being the benefits of Downtown Revitalisations to all parties.

Recommendation: Town should include its policy on the approval process for “box stores” when publishing the Downtown Revitalisation policy. Owners have concerns of location (drawing people out of the downtown), and facades (new stores must have look and feel of current downtowns). Many expressed concerns over losing the small town charm.

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## Issue #4 – Improve Communication between Businesses and Relevant Government Agencies

### Supporting Data

- Of the 12 provincial ministries listed in BC7a, “No Contact” was the highest rank, ranging from a high of 98% for Ontario Exports to a low of 66% for Ministry of Tourism & Recreation
- Of the 4 Federal agencies listed in BC7b, “No Contact” ranged from a low of 67% for HRSD to a high of 98% for the National Research Council of Canada.
- There is a concern that our businesses are not accessing government programs that are designed to assist small business owners.

### Objective – Create plan to help increase communication between government agencies and local businesses

**Action 1:** Inform agencies of low levels of contact with Saugeen Shores businesses

*Lead:* Business Enterprise Centre

*Partners:* none

*Funding:* none

*Timeline:* June 2012

**Action 2:** Research programs available to businesses

*Lead:* Business Enterprise Centre

*Partners:* SS Chamber of Commerce, BIA, and the Town

*Funding:* none

*Timeline:* ongoing

**Action 3:** Promote programs to businesses, where applicable

*Lead:* Business Enterprise Centre

*Partners:* SS Chamber of Commerce, BIA, and the Town Point of Contact

*Funding:* none

*Timeline:* ongoing

## Issue #5 – Address Workforce Development Concerns

### Supporting Data for Labour Availability

- 40% cited “Availability of Skilled Labour” as a barrier to businesses (BC4). This was the number one barrier. In the same question 23% cited “Availability of Unskilled Labour “(This was the eighth placed barrier)
- Of businesses experiencing difficulties with their expansion plans, 29% cited labour availability – the second placed difficulty and 18% cited Labour training, fifth place (FP13)
- 47% of businesses cited “Availability of Labour” as very important, and a further 27% cited “Somewhat important” to their competitive advantage over the next three years (BC15)
- 60% rated Availability of Workers for Your Business Needs as “Fair” or “Poor” (WD5a). 20% of these cited competition with Bruce Power as a factor influencing labour availability
- 63% said “Fair” or “Poor” to Availability of Skilled Labour as a factor of doing business (LC9)
- The significant barriers to training were “Distance to Training facility” 54%, “Cost” 37%, “Availability of Training Locally” 25%, “Awareness of Existing Training Programs” 25%, and Losing Trained Employees to Other Businesses 23%

### Objective 1 – Promote Education on Employee Retention Strategies

**Action 1:** Host workshops that inform businesses of resources and strategies for retention

*Lead:* SS Chamber, and SS Business Enterprise Centre in partnership with other agencies

*Partners:* Federal and Provincial Government agencies (MEDI, OMAFRA, HRDC)

*Timeline:* 2012 – 2013

### Objective 2 - Skills Training and Certifications

**Action 1:** Mimic First Time/Full Time for Youth (cost sharing training program) by creating similar program for local businesses’ employees and active job seekers

*Lead:* SS Chamber of Commerce

*Partners:* Four County Labour Market Planning Board, BCFDC, Georgian College

### Objective 3 – Cost Sharing and pool resources and opportunities

**Action 1:** Approach the major employers in Saugeen Shores to share training resources with local small businesses and Job seekers

*Lead:* SS Business Enterprise Centre and Point of Contact

*Partners:* SS Business Enterprise Centre, SS Chamber of Commerce, Four County Labour Market Planning Board

**Recommendation:** the BR+E Partners could explore issues concerning labour availability and actual workforce numbers needed. Included in this study would be the unemployment rate of Saugeen Shores and outlying areas, as well as the movement of labour between the two.

## Issue #6 – Affordable Housing

### Supporting Data

The BR+E task force understands that the majority of jobs in town are unskilled (average employee needs for skilled is 1.58 persons, for unskilled is 3.42 persons (WD8)). However, the high wages of Bruce Power and high income of summer residents have driven up both rental and purchases prices for housing. The Town should consider Bruce County Housing 2021 guidelines and timelines for this Action Plan.

### Objective 1 – Promote the Gear-to-Income Program to landlords

**Action 1:** Ask local business organizations to advertise the need for landlords to participate

*Lead:* Town/Chamber of Commerce

*Partners:* Bruce County Housing, County YIMBY Group, Chamber, Port Elgin BIA, Southampton Business Group, media

*Funding:* Bruce County Housing

*Timeline:* April/May 2012

### Objective 2 – Increase housing options at more affordable pricing

**Action 1:** Make vacant land available and provide surplus land at below market cost

*Lead:* Town,

*Partners:* Bruce County Housing, County YIMBY Group

*Funding:* Bruce County Housing

*Timeline:* 2012

**Action 2:** Reduce fees (DC's, property tax rebate)

*Lead:* Town,

*Partners:* Bruce County Housing, County YIMBY Group, Bruce County

*Funding:* Bruce County Housing

*Timeline:* 2012

**Action 3:** Allow more secondary units

*Lead:* Town,

*Partners:* Bruce County Housing, County YIMBY Group, Bruce County

*Funding:* Bruce County Housing

*Timeline:* 2012

**Action 4:** Reduce municipal standards for affordable housing projects

*Lead:* Town,

*Partners:* Bruce County Housing, County YIMBY Group, Bruce County

*Funding:* Bruce County Housing

*Timeline:* 2012

### Objective 3 - Create a Housing Committee

**Action:** Council to be requested to approve the Creation of a Housing Committee

*Lead:* Town,

*Partners:* Bruce County Housing, County YIMBY Group, developers, Rotary Club, Landlords, Tenants, Saugeen Shores Help and Resource Planning Project, YMCA

*Funding:* Bruce County Housing

*Timeline:* Consider Bruce County Housing 2021

## Issue #7 – Improve Communications with Farmers of Saugeen Shores

### Supporting Data

- 67% of Farmers rated “Support from the Municipality as “Fair or Poor”
- 15% cited Municipal support as an issue to improve business climate (BC6)
- 15% cited Municipal support as an issue that would have the greatest impact on the growth of their business.

### Objective 1 – Facilitate communications between Town and Farmers

**Action 1:** Create a Farmers’ Point of Contact to address Saugeen Shores’ Farmers enquiries

*Lead:* CAO

*Timeline:* ASAP

**Action 2:** Inform farmers and local OMAFRA personnel about the creation of Point of Contact

*Lead:* Saugeen Shores Farmers’ Point of contact

*Timeline:* after the creation of Farmers Point of Contact

**Action 3:** Ensure newly appointed Point of Contact is subscribing to OMFRA Connects

*Lead:* Saugeen Shores Farmers’ Point of Contact

*Timeline:* after the creation of Farmers Point of Contact

## Issue #8 –Businesses Are Experiencing Difficulties in Acquiring Land for Warehousing and Lite Industry

### Supporting Data

- 5 businesses (45% of construction and manufacturing businesses surveyed) made comments about difficulties in finding suitable site to expand their operations.
  - Note: The Town currently has industrial zoned land up for sale
- 14% of all businesses want to see lite industry as part of economic diversification

### Objective 1 – Hold a focus group to investigate reasons why small businesses say they are having difficulties gaining access to lite industrial sites.

**Action 1:** Investigate local small business need for lite industrial land, to catalogue what are their needs

- Size
- Structure
- Use
- Special Needs/Requirements

*Lead:* Town Point of Contact, or Town Clerk

*Timeline:* late Autumn when owners are less busy

**Action 2:** Investigate local business issues around acquiring lite industrial land.

Participants should be those businesses who have investigated land purchase

- Size of land requirements
- Location requirements
- Land cost
- Site planning costs
- Lack of leasing options
- Timelines to implement site plans

*Lead:* Town Point of Contact, or Town Clerk  
*Partners:* SSBEC and Chamber to help invite businesses to participate in focus group  
*Timeline:* late Autumn when owners are less busy

### **Objective 2 – Investigate possible resolutions to issues identified from Focus Group**

**Action 1:** Analyse if town’s policies could be altered to assist business acquisition

*Lead:* Point of Contact, or Town Clerk

**Action 2:** Investigate if other municipalities have had success in fostering small lite-industrial business

*Lead:* Point of Contact, or Town Clerk

*Partners:* SSBEC and Chamber of Commerce

### **Objective 3 – Inform business community the results**

**Action 1:** Create summary report of the results of the investigation

*Lead:* Point of Contact, or Town Clerk

*Partners:* None

## **Recommendations**

There were several items that the BR+E Task Force deemed to be more an issue of communication than direct action. These issues highlight the fact that the town needs to be more creative in its endeavours to inform the business community of various strategies for ongoing issues.

### **Use Town Website to Publicize Plans and Achievements**

A primary means of Communication is the Town’s website. Currently it is underutilised as a means of informing the local businesses of it strategies for dealing with ongoing issues of administration. A “What We are Doing” or a “Current Issues”, section on the website would allow Business to know what the various Town Departments are working on. Two examples of items that need better communication are

1. Traffic flow on the street

30% of respondents rated traffic as “needs improving” and another 32 deemed it “Fair” (CQ6).

Owners were unaware of the Town’s plan to reduce traffic flow in Downtown Port Elgin. It is currently completing a new North/South corridor and has plans for an additional one.

2. Parking

“Location of Parking Spaces”, “Availability of Parking Spaces” and “Number of Parking Spaces” were the three highest ranked “Very Beneficial to my business” of a list of 18 items (CQ16). In terms of number of parking spots and lots 29% stated “Needs Improving” and 22% stated “Fair” (CQ6)

Owners were unaware that the Town has plans to purchase property to add additional parking for the downtowns of both Port Elgin and Southampton.

**Parking and Washrooms Signage**

Most owners were not aware of the 2 public washrooms in Downtown Port Elgin. Southampton businesses asked for better signage to show the parking behind the Coliseum.

The Town should investigate new signage.

**By-Law Officer Outreach**

50% of businesses rated “Municipal By-laws” as Fair or Poor. (LC9)  
 42% of owners rated Parking Enforcement as “Fair” or “Needs improving” (CQ7)  
 Issues around By-laws were the 2 hour parking limit, owners parking all day on in front of shops, winter parking policy, signage issues, inconsistent enforcement, and lack of readability

The by-law officer should try to build a relationship with business owners to understand community issues and to explain town policies to owners. Also the Town should consider developing a table of content of the by-laws and post it on the Town’s website so business owners can find the by-laws on specific issues.

**Police Outreach**

Overall, the Saugeen Police have a higher degree of satisfaction that the provincial average of all other communities that have completed the BR+E

BC5a. Policing	Saugeen Shores	Provincial Averages
Very satisfied	45%	36%
Somewhat satisfied	26%	36%
Somewhat dis-satisfied	9%	11%
Very dis-satisfied	3%	4%
No contact	16%	14%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

However there were several issues that were presented in the comments of the surveyed businesses. These issues were raised by all groupings, from very satisfied to very dissatisfied, and from most industry sectors.

Owners expressed a desire for more non-emergency police presence in Downtown Southampton and in residential neighbourhoods.

Owners also expressed a desire for the local police force to take on a more community partnership role, in addition to law enforcement.

There was a desire for a Youth Outreach program to ensure that the younger generation maintains a relationship of mutual understanding and respect with the police. Also, owners expressed a desire for the community police to partner with the Tourism industry to help create a fun, yet safe and secure, experience for our valuable tourists.

**Desire for Public Transit**

Public Transit was the 4th ranked barrier to business (BC4). Owners expressed a desire to link the two downtowns and the Port Elgin beach to its downtown core

34% were “Somewhat Dissatisfied “or “Very Dissatisfied” that the Town has no public transit.

During the surveying stage, there was neither a public nor commercial vehicle to transport people with mobility issues.

Since the end of the surveying stage, the Town has entered a one year trial period with the Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART), a local specialized public transit service dedicated to the mobility needs of the mentally and physically challenged, elderly and frail residents.

#### Recommendations

When the Town reviews the outcome of this trial period, Town should consider the value of a more comprehensive public transportation system.

#### Future Consideration

Currently 13% of employees of surveyed businesses live outside the municipality (C15). Town could ask Four County Labour Market Planning Board to consider investigating the movement of labour between Saugeen Shores and outlying areas. It may be advantageous to provide an at-cost shuttle service to link these communities as a means to increase the Town's labour pool.

### Businesses have concerns with Utilities

- 20% are somewhat or very dissatisfied with Public Utilities (BC5a)
- 38% of owners have concerns with respect to energy supply management and efficiency (BD11a)

#### Telecommunications Concerns

- Internet Speed
- IT capacity at the edge of town
- Cell Phone Reception At The Beach
- Customer Service Levels
- Cell Phone Reception During Peak Summer Times

#### Electricity

- Electrical Supply
- Customer Service Levels

#### Natural Gas

- availability of service at the outskirts of Town
- The Partners should investigate methods for addressing recurring issues with local Utility Providers

### Community assets to develop (CQ13)

The high quality of life is due in part to small town charm. But it also has to do with the natural heritage. When asked to list three of the community's advantages as a place to do business (question LC6), the number one single comment was "The natural beauty makes people want to be here". It is no wonder that the "top four community assets that businesses would most like to see further developed" (CQ13) are about enjoying the town's natural surroundings.

Farmers Market was the number one community asset that businesses would like to see developed (65%). The Chamber of Commerce has agreed to investigate this item.

Waterfront was the 2<sup>nd</sup> asset (46%). All business sectors understand the beach plays a major factor for our tourism and retail business. Concerns raised were garbage-bins overflowing, lack of recycling and lack of sand. There were also requests for adult dining and more festivals like the old beach carnival.

Since completion of the survey, a new Waterfront Ad Hoc Committee was formed by the Town. These issues will be passed to this committee, as they are doing a more comprehensive study on how to improve the waterfront.

Walking and Bike Trails was third (43%) and Parks and/or Green Space was fourth. 15% of owners stated “Very Beneficial” and 27% said “Somewhat Beneficial” to “the benefits of Parks and Trails to your business” (CQ16)

This information will be passed to the Parks and Trails Public Advisory Committee. The BR+E will recommend that the Committee should investigate how the Trail system could incorporate local businesses in their system, such as creating gateways to local businesses, or creating routes from accommodation to the trails.

## General Business Skill Development

The following items are the summary of business issues related to skills development. These items will be forwarded to the Chamber of Commerce, and the Business Enterprise Centre to help them plan seminars and workshops to assist businesses with their skill development.

### 1. Encourage local businesses to increase presence on the Internet (BD13)

- have internet connection - 98%
- on others websites - 18%
- have their own website - 68%
- have no web presence - 14%

Reasons for not implementing telecommunications technology (Bd14) are

- Effectiveness or usefulness of application is unknown - 14%
- Experience - 13%
- Start-up cost - 12%
- Time 11%

### 2. Facilitate business to business collaboration (MA1)

- Networking/Info Sharing – 45%
- Joint Marketing - 34%
- Joint Product Purchasing – 10%

### 3. Focus workshops and seminars on the following issues:

Factors to remain competitive over the next three years (BD15) that ranked “Very Important” are

- Improve Customer Service - 75 %
- Market Development Locally - 64%
- Strategic marketing - 59%

The top five responses to LC10 (“Please describe how local business associations and/or economic development offices could assist your business sector”) were:

- Website development - 65%
- Marketing seminars - 60%
- E-marketing - 57%
- Networking sessions - 54%
- Joint advertising and marketing - 53%

Overall skills to be improved are (WD13)

- Computer Software - 43%
- Customer Service - 43%
- Working with others” 33%
- Sales and Marketing - 32%

Businesses with formal written plans (C10, 11, 12)

- have a Succession Plan - 44%
- have a Business Plan - 60%
- have a Marketing Plan – 51%

4. Develop a Mentoring Program (WD16).

- 75% of businesses believe a mentoring program would be of benefit to the businesses of this community (only 46 for the provincial average).
- 66% said they would benefit from being mentored and
- 46% said they were willing to be a mentor

## Industry Specific Results

### RETAIL

The Retail industry is the largest sector of the town's economy, accounting for 31% of all permanent employment, and 20% of all businesses.

For all businesses the major issues in the retailing environment that "Needs Improving" (CQ12) were

- Uniform store hours" 45%
- Extended Store Hours 32%

Many non-retailer owners expressed concerns that stores are closed when tourists want to shop, specifically evening hours (5pm to 9pm). Some retailers stated that extended hours were not-profitable

For only Retail businesses, the top four recommendations to improve the retail business environment (RB7) are:

- Improved streetscape - 38%
- Improved Parking- 38%
- Focused Downtown revitalization -38%
- More restaurants and Entertainment Facilities – 33%

The programs and service that would benefit their business the most(RB6) are

- Marketing on the Web - 79%
- Retail and Special Event Coordination - 71%
- Joint Marketing - 71%
- Network Events - 67%

In terms of retail skills that retailers would like to see improved, and what workshops they would attend (RB8)

- "Retaining existing and attracting new customers" - 75% want to improve, 50% would attend a workshop
- "Customer Service Training" - 54% want to improve, 50% would attend a workshop
- "Staff Training and Development" - 58% want to improve, 42% would attend

Other issues raised were the perception that local residences do not support local businesses, competition is becoming unfriendly, and the need for effective promotion.

The Chamber of Commerce and the Business Enterprise Centre will review these items and will provide the seminars and workshops the retailers are interested in.

### TOURISM

The second largest type of business is Food and Accommodations, accounting for 16% of the Town's businesses, and providing 14% of permanent full time jobs (the third largest industry for full time employment).

The beach is the number one a draw for Tourists and Summer Residents and 100% of our tourism businesses agreed that Saugeen Shores is a good area to operate a tourism business (T3)

Most non-tourism business owners see the advantage of the tourist, as they listed “Tourism” as the sixth advantage to do business in this community (LC6). “Tourism” also tied for seventh place as a disadvantage (LC7) due to the seasonality, and unpredictability of this vital industry. A wet and cold summer hurts a lot of local businesses.

Our Tourism businesses describe themselves as (T1a)

- Accommodation - 55%
- Attraction - 9%
- Accommodation and Food - 27%
- Tour Guide - 9%

They are located (T1b)

- In an Outlying Non-Urban Area – 45%
- In a Highway/Commercial District- 27%
- In a Downtown - 27%

The businesses are open (T1c)

- Year Round - 55%
- Spring, Summer Fall only - 36%
- Summer Only - 9%.
- 73% agreed that their business did have the potential to expand in the shoulder season.

The primary geographic markets for Tourism businesses (T9) were

- Ontario - 100%
- Local within 100km - 27%
- Rest of Canada – 18%

And future markets to target were

- Ontario - 100%
- Local within 100km - 27%
- Michigan, USA – 18%

The Type of target markets were

- Leisure Travel - 82%
- Outdoor Recreationalists - 55%
- Corporate - 27%

And future markets to target were

- Leisure Travel - 36%
- Outdoor Recreationalists - 36%
- Motorcoach Groups - 36%

The top three advantages to operating a tourism business in this area are

- The Beach - 50%
- Natural Beauty of the Area - 40%
- Small Town Charm - 30%

These advantages emphasis the need for the Town to ensure policies that safe guard the environment and that keep “Small Town Charm” at the forefront of downtown revitalisation.

The top two disadvantages to operating a tourism business in this area are

- Seasonal - 50%
- Weather - 30%

10 other issues were cited, but they all tied at 10%.

For a broader view of attractions, all 86 businesses were asked “What are and what could be the primary products that attract people to the area and your business, now and in three years” (CQ4). The top five were:

Attraction	Now	3 yrs	Attraction	Now	3 yrs
• Beach	76%	76%	• Sunsets	40%	40%
• Camping	47%	48%	• Hiking Trails	38%	40%
• Golf	42%	43%			

The attractions that had the greatest potential for future growth, given current trends and/or extra promotion from the municipal tourism agency were:

Attraction	Now	3 yrs	increase
• Ecotourism	12	25	13
• Culinary	11	22	11
• Arts & Culture	27	37	10
• Performing arts	7	17	10
• Cycling	23	28	5

The major barriers to the expansion of your tourist business” (T16) were

- Seasonality - 70%
- Effective regional tourism promotion - 50%
- Access to financing - 40%

To help “make your community a more physically appealing tourist area” (T5)

- Improved Signage - 73%
- More and better festivals - 65%
- More Restaurants - 55%
- Enforce weed by-laws - 55%
- Addressing Buildings in poor conditions - 55%

**Recommendations:**

The Town’s Tourism Department/ Chamber of Commerce will continue to champion the Tourist Industry goals, and to improve the communications of their plans and strategies. The Chamber does have plans to increase the visibility of the Info Centers, and to work more closely with County and Regional partners for effective promotions. The Chamber is working with the Town to increase visibility of the Town Brand and its new tourism website.

**Next Steps**

Once this report has been received by Town Council, the BR+E Partners will work to implement the actions and recommendations of this report. The Partners will start with the smaller steps first, and will bring the major initiatives back to Council

Six months after the implementation of the project report, the BR+E Partners will review its progress and bring these findings to Council.

The Task Force Team sees this report as a starting point of a community based conversation about the economic well-being of the people of Saugeen Shores. We hope to build upon the momentum started by the BR+E and have meaningful dialogue about how to strengthen the local economy. After Council’s approval, the next step will be to post this report on the Municipal website and invite the public to review the results. People can bring their comments, queries or ideas to any of the Partners.

## Acknowledgements

### The BR+E Task Force

The Task Force of the Saugeen Shores is comprised of a broad based group of community leaders: local business owners, government officials and a not-for profit agency. The Task Force worked to ensure that the larger business community was fully supportive of the BR+E Project. They also assisted and guided the BR+E Leadership Team throughout the project. It was the Task Force that determined the key findings of the survey and worked to create the Action Plan.

Ms. Cheryl Goetz, Herbal Magic  
Ms. Gemma Mendez Smith, Four County Labour Market Planning Board  
Mr. Jay Pausner, Town of Saugeen Shores  
Mr. Jeff Carver, The Wismer House  
Mr. Larry Allison, CAO, Town of Saugeen Shores  
Mr. Luke Charbonneau, Town of Saugeen Shores  
Ms. Marie Kew, Cedar Court Motel  
Ms. Melanie Myers, First Concrete Ltd.  
Mr. Terry Chappel, Dales Carpentry  
Ms. Victoria Serda, Saugeen Sustainability Volunteer and Resource Centre

### Leadership Team

The leadership managed the project on a day-to-day basis. They solicited businesses to be participants, recruited and trained the Volunteer Visitors, and compiled the BR+E summary report.

Ms. Joanne Robbins, General Manager, Saugeen Shores Chamber of Commerce  
Ms. Jill Roote, Manager, Business Enterprise Centre of Saugeen Shores  
Mr. Patrick Checknita, BR+E Coordinator, Business Enterprise Centre of Saugeen Shores  
Ms. Ginny Henry, Youth Co-ordinator, Business Enterprise Centre of Saugeen Shores

### Volunteer Visitors

The Volunteer Visitors were community members who worked in teams to meet with business owners and perform the survey.

Ms. Alison Charbonneau	Ms. Lori Throwbridge
Ms. Barbara Ribey	Ms. Peggy Zeppieri
Mr. Bill Streeter	Ms. Sally Hunt
Ms. Cindy Doyle	Ms. Sara Cottrell
Mr. Kenneth Pace	Mr. Tony Sheard

### OMAFRA Representatives

Mr. Pat Kuntz - Saugeen Shores BR+E Advisor  
Mr. George Ferreira - BR+E Database (Executive Pulse) Advisor  
Ms. Vicky Luke - Facilitator of Action Plan meeting