

# 2015

**What Kind of Town Do You Want in 10 or 20 Years?**



Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce

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# WHAT KIND OF TOWN DO YOU WANT IN 10 OR 20 YEARS?

## CONTRIBUTION OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY'S THINKING TOWARDS MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBTON SHORES STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### BACKGROUND

An open invitation to all businesses in Lambton Shores to attend a Round Table Discussion on four key performance areas on Wednesday, May 27 was initiated and facilitated by the Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce.

Notification of the Round Table meeting was accomplished by email to Chamber Members, shared with the Forest BIA for distribution to their Members, announced via press release to local media, including the Lakeshore Advance, Forest Standard, Parkhill Gazette, Exeter Times-Advocate and radio stations myFM90.5 and 104.9theBeach, a special invitation to Council by email and announced on the Municipality's electronic message boards.

These discussions generated feedback from a cross-section of local business owners, service club representatives, 2013/2014 Economic Development Committee representatives, Kettle & Stony Point First Nations representatives, elected councilors and senior municipal staff relative to four key performance indicators:

1. Tourism
2. Recreation & Culture
3. Transportation, Economic Development & Infrastructure, and
4. Political Structure

Table discussions focused on one of these four areas, with several Chamber directors acting as moderators and providing background information and discussion-starter open-ended questions. Discussions focused on determining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats within each area (SWOT Analysis).

Prior to the meeting, interested attendees were invited to download and review several resource documents, including:

- **Current strategic plan** – revised May 2014 ([www.grandbendchamber.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/draft\\_6\\_lambton\\_shores\\_new\\_official\\_plan\\_-\\_may\\_2014\\_opt.pdf](http://www.grandbendchamber.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/draft_6_lambton_shores_new_official_plan_-_may_2014_opt.pdf))
- **Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing Plan** (PDF) (prepared for Town of Bosanquet, Township of Stephen & Village of Grand Bend, by Kevin C. Walsh, Economic Development Officer,

final version March 1998) ([www.grandbendchamber.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Greater-Grand-Bend-Strategic-Marketing-Plan-1997.pdf](http://www.grandbendchamber.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Greater-Grand-Bend-Strategic-Marketing-Plan-1997.pdf))

- **Economic Development Action Plan** (PDF) – prepared by Economic Development Committee, submitted to Lambton Shores Council, August 7, 2014 ([www.grandbendchamber.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Economic-Development-Action-Plan-Final.pdf](http://www.grandbendchamber.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Economic-Development-Action-Plan-Final.pdf))

Some interesting quotes were pulled from these resource publications and enlarged for reference/discussion at the meeting.

Approximately 32+ people attended and participated. What follows is a summary of the suggestions and feedback collected.

## ROUND TABLE INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Chamber Past President Glen Baillie opened the meeting with a preamble that stated:

*The Municipality's Strategic Plan is an important document. It determines which projects are planned for and what level of importance those projects receive in terms of time frames and money needed.*

*The Chamber organized the Round Table event to put the point-of-view of the business community in front of Councilors and Municipal staff. It is hoped this relieves any stresses that may occur if the plan comes out without initial consultation and misses things that are obvious to the business community, but perhaps not as much to Municipal representatives.*

*It also needs to be noted this community has a curious set of circumstances in that it is comprised of an amalgamated municipality that combines a farming community, a tourist-based economy and a large First Nations community.*

*This meeting, if successful, will find common ground among all of us and perhaps some recommendations to the municipality that will benefit us all for years to come.*

## KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS

### 1. TOURISM

Discussion on tourism began with a description of how tourism and visitor services are delivered to the Municipality of Lambton Shores and the particular challenges presented by the municipality's geographic location as it pertains to the delivery of comprehensive, cohesive and appropriately customer-focused promotion. This included an outline of the operational parameters and responsibilities of Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), including sub-destination marketing organizations, such as the Chamber itself in its provision of tourism and visitor services to the Municipality of Lambton Shores.

Lambton Shores officially falls under the auspices of Southwestern Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC or RTO1) and Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL) with the Chamber of Commerce's efforts working locally to

compliment TSL's efforts. Given that our geo-political boundaries (RTO, county, municipal) converge at the north end of Lambton Shores, the Chamber's experience has been that instead of ensuring this area is well represented, those geo-political boundaries actually work against representing the local area's tourism product<sup>1</sup> in a cohesive manner. There are critical issues in ensuring adequate and appropriate tourism marketing materials, support and activities and treating the entire area as a single entity from a visitor/tourist perspective.

Discussion involved the issue of promoting an established brand within an amalgamated municipal entity that has no target market recognition (research results from Lambton County's Branding Initiative<sup>2</sup> conducted by North Star Destination Strategies). From meeting attendees involved in local tourism and tourism-based business within Grand Bend's core, the importance of "Grand Bend" as a highly recognizable, 120-year old brand was considered of utmost importance, including what they considered the area's Unique Selling Proposition<sup>3</sup> – the beach – acting as the primary calling-card to the area.

It was stated that according to tourism marketing experts, visitors to an area only spend a small portion of their time at the attraction that triggered their visit and the rest of their time doing something else while there. In other words, the Main Beach may trigger the visit, but once a visitor has finished their beach experience they look elsewhere in the area for other things to do. The Welcome Centre's experience with visitors corroborates this finding in that staff and summer students provide information about what to do throughout the area to visitors drawn here by the Main Beach.

However, the beach was a point of contention with businesses from other areas of Lambton Shores having the opinion that Lambton Shores has more to offer than just the beach and much discussion was had itemizing all the area's tourist assets. In addition, businesses located from the southern part of the Municipality felt sister towns such as Forest have just as many assets, just different.

It's noteworthy to include mention in this report that Kevin Walsh (economic development officer for the Greater Grand Bend Strategic Marketing project) noted the danger of becoming fixated on the area's many tourism assets and losing focus when developing a targeted marketing campaign. Twenty

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<sup>1</sup> **Tourism Product:** Defined as natural, (natural area attractions such as the Pinery Provincial Park, Rock Glen Conservation Area, kilometers of municipal beachfront, commercial attractions such as the Huron Country Playhouse, Grand Bend Motorplex

<sup>2</sup> **North Star Destination Strategies research** conducted in 2013 showed consumers, visitors, residents, community leaders and businesses in Lambton, Middlesex, Huron and Chatham-Kent as well as specific urban areas such as London, Greater Toronto Area and Port Huron/Michigan didn't have any recognition on "Lambton Shores", but could identify "Grand Bend" as "beautiful beaches, summer destination and tourism". Forest was identified from residents of Lambton County when prompted for information they knew of "Lambton Shores".

<sup>3</sup> **A unique selling proposition (USP, also seen as unique selling point)** is a factor that differentiates a product from its competitors, such as the lowest cost, the highest quality or the first-ever product of its kind. A USP could be thought of as "what you have that competitors don't."

years later, Roger Brooks<sup>4</sup> also emphasizes this point when he states, “jettison the generic and narrow your marketing focus”.

It’s clear that identifying the area’s Unique Selling Proposition, developing a call-to-action and tagline that speaks to this area’s tourists/visitors and developing a tourism marketing campaign in support of the area’s tourism industry may be best left to professionals to avoid local politics and branding by committee.

Tourism-based businesses involved in this discussion emphasized the need for immediate action in support of the local tourism industry. Their experience of successive years characterized by a poor economy, increased cost of doing business, increased government regulations (all levels), issues around amalgamation and identity, lack of effective support from destination marketing organizations, local issues around parking and bylaw enforcement/implementation, strict drinking/driving legislation, lack of public transportation and increased competition from other Ontario towns that have tourism marketing budgets and staff have coalesced into a tangible threat to tourism businesses in Lambton Shores.

In addition to what seems the perfect storm threatening local tourism, were key tourism elements that remain lacking in the local marketing and municipal arsenal, such as tourist/visitor focused wayfinding and signage, public transportation and advertising budget.

**The groups’ consensus was as follows:**

**GET A PLAN**

- Develop a local Tourism Strategy
- Setup a local Tourism Committee or Destination Marketing Organization to ensure the needs of the local tourism businesses and attractions are met and the area is represented appropriately to its targeted consumer and markets
- Hire marketing personnel to get the job done
- Develop a Brand (deemed time sensitive)

**Need Funding**

- **Reinvest Parking Revenue:** Parking revenue should be reinvested (at least a portion annually) into the tourism industry as a means of funding the marketing strategy and activities which in turn ensures succeeding years of parking revenue. Parking revenue comes from visitors to the area – it makes sense to ensure visitors continue to come to town. The cost of Tourism & Visitor

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<sup>4</sup> **Roger Brooks:** internationally recognized destination marketer Roger Brooks ([www.rogerbrooksinternational.com](http://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com)). Brooks has worked with a number of Canadian towns on their destination marketing efforts, including Bracebridge, Old Strathcona, St. Albert, Vermilion, Vulcan and Whistler.

Services needs to be viewed as part of the cost-of-doing-business just as much as maintaining Blue Flag designation and paying for lifeguards.

- **RTO & DMO Coordination:** The focus and activity of the Regional Tourism Organizations and Destination Marketing Organizations that service Lambton Shores needs to be better coordinated so local tourism product is fairly and appropriately supported. Funding opportunities exist, but event evaluation criteria provide a “red-tape” hurdle overwhelming to amateur volunteer event planners.
- **Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL):** The official DMO for Lambton County must be fully engaged in Lambton Shores, the county’s premier vacation destination. This requires greater connection within individual communities and with local event planners and local tourism-based businesses than is being experienced currently or in the past.

### Tactics

- **Map of Lambton Shores:** Two community organizations have independently identified the need for a map of Lambton Shores geared to area visitors, namely the Lambton Shores Nature Trail Blazers ([www.lsntrblazers.com](http://www.lsntrblazers.com)) and the Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce.

Currently, the only maps available to visitors are the ones included in the area’s visitor guide (It Starts at the Beach) and TSL’s Navigate map. Unfortunately, in both instances the maps only show the downtown cores of Lambton Shores’ communities and in the case of Navigate far too small to be of value. Conceptually, both the Trail Blazers and Chamber as well as meeting attendees believe the map would be effective if it included all of the area’s attractions (natural and commercial), such as hiking trails, beaches, parks and conservation areas, Grand Bend Motorplex, Huron Country Playhouse, Forest Fair grounds and unique businesses such as Rock Glen Herb Garden, Twin Pines Cidery, galleries and artisan workshops.

- **Wayfinding Signage:** All agreed that area visitors and tourists have difficulty finding even top attractions, including the Main Beach. Branded, tourist-friendly signs indicating the Main Beach and beaches generally, shopping districts, marinas, hiking trails, museums, the giant dune, the waterfall and fossil-hunting need to be in place. A few attendees had also attended the recent Tourism Summit hosted by TSL in May and had attended Roger Brooks’ presentation. In referencing Brook’s recommendations, it was pointed out that both pedestrian-based and vehicle-based signage was needed. Chamber staff confirmed the most asked questions at the Welcome Centre included directions to the Main Beach, Huron Country Playhouse, Pinery Provincial Park, Lambton Heritage Museum and the library.
- **Public Transportation / Shuttle Service:** Attendees identified the great need for public transportation to enable visitors, tourists and residents easy access to shopping, restaurants and attractions in the municipality. It was pointed out that hundreds of potentially money-spending area visitors are trapped in the various campgrounds sprinkled along the Highway 21 corridor due to today’s strict drinking and driving laws. It was pointed out that an average woman who

has consumed two glasses of wine would not be legal to drive. Further, that with the penalties in effect today, people are wary of taking a chance with their licence. This means campers (tent or trailer) are tending to remain at the campsite rather than opting to go into town for a meal or evening outing. This trend affects Grand Bend, Port Franks and Forest – as campgrounds along the lakeshore are cut-off from the main retail areas of the municipality. Although there are several taxi businesses in the area and a couple of restaurants have made efforts to shuttle paying customers, the overall effect of stranding area visitors at their base of accommodation is seen as a primary inhibitor to restaurant and retail sales.

- **Parking Incentives:** (currently applicable only to Grand Bend) Although it was generally recognized there is a need to charge for parking, the idea of parking incentives was thought to be a means to overcome any associated negativity. A parking incentive program, similar to those used by major downtown cores would be a good way of making the Grand Bend visit experience a more positive one.
- **Digital Advertising<sup>5</sup>:**
- **TSL Board Members/Configuration:** Tourism Sarnia Lambton is the official Destination Marketing Organization for Lambton County and as such is responsible for the marketing of Lambton Shores to tourists and area visitors. There was some discussion that TSL is unaware of this community's culture and assets or how to market this area to its target audience. In addition, several attendees thought TSL was just about Sarnia and didn't realize it was supposed to be marketing this area as well. In reviewing the current makeup of TSL's board of directors, it was felt the board should be re-configured to be more representative of Lambton County's tourist product and geography, instead of having so many Sarnia-based and non-tourism based representatives on its board. Current board structure includes representatives from chemical industry, golf course, OLG, county political appointments, economic partnership, school board, chamber of commerce, health sciences and farm-gate and one accommodation provider. According to a Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership statistic, 55% of all tourist-based businesses are in Lambton Shores. It was also discussed that the tourist destination marketing organization should be reflective of that reality.

### **Quotes from Supporting Documents**

*"Tourists are the foundation of the economic activity in the region and function as an important catalyst for future growth and development.*

*The communities within the study area would become nothing but residential hamlets with limited services without the tourists. "*

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<sup>5</sup> Digital marketing is an umbrella term for the targeted, measurable, and interactive marketing of products or services using digital technologies to reach and convert leads into customers. The Internet is a core promotional medium, in addition to mobile and traditional TV and radio. Activities include search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), content marketing, influencer marketing, content automation, campaign marketing, e-commerce, social media marketing, e-mail direct marketing, display advertising, e-books and other forms of digital media.



(Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing plan, pg. 14)

*“The likelihood people will return to a region is closely linked to the quality of welcome, availability of products and relevant information they receive during their visit.”*

(Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing plan, pg. 32-33)

*“In Southwestern Ontario there are 584 significant beaches at 528 separate sites. The Region’s beaches and lakeshore environments function as critical ‘drawing card’.”*

(Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing plan, pg. 32-33)

## 2. RECREATION & CULTURE

Lambton Shores has many cultural elements that need further awareness to bring these to the forefront of residents and visitors alike. The Farmer’s Market’s in Grand Bend and Forest, theatre (film and stage), art galleries and workshops and the natural beauty of our beaches and trails are just a few of the examples.

The lack of signage to provide promotion and direction hinder their growth and, in some cases, force some out of the community to experience the same thing we have in Lambton Shores. A stronger overall web presence to improve promotion of local culture should be undertaken.

Aspects of the cultural strategy moving forwards should include Wayfinding Signage throughout the area, promotion and use of our beach areas for cultural events such as concerts and multi-cultural events, expanding the use of under-used recreational facilities and further research and development of an arts and culture hub such as MARVEL.

All of these things combined will bring a new breadth of events and services to Lambton Shores and provide creative and cultural outlets to residents and visitors.

The Grand Bend beach usage policy needs to be revisited and made less restrictive for use by community, cultural and recreational groups. The commercial integrity portion of the beach usage policy could remain intact while opening up the area to new events that will attract visitors to the community and provide revenue for local merchants due to increased traffic. A study into the cost and possible usage volume of a public pool and splash pad in Forest should be strongly considered.

With hundreds of kilometers of roadways and trails, the maximization of the recreational use of these assets must be encouraged and realized.

With a tremendous emphasis being put on healthy and active lifestyles, Lambton Shores can be shown to be a healthy and progressive community by planning for and implementing programs and policies that encourage and promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Working with First Nations groups and improving communication within the community to bring awareness to the recreation and cultural aspects of Lambton Shores will be essential to ensure initiatives are successful.

**The groups' consensus was as follows:**

**Cultural**

- Farmer's Markets (Forest / Grand Bend): Lack of signage to advertise and promote
- Wayfinding Signage – provides recreation and cultural benefits
- Web presence – more information for cultural events on website
- Visit Lambtonshores.ca

**Strategy:**

- Wayfinding Signage
- Beach Events – Culture = Tourism
- Opportunities to expand usage of recreation facilities
- MARVEL – Cultural hub = Tourism

**Recreation**

- Revisit Beach Usage Policy – process to access needs to be made easier; encourage recreational use of area beaches and waterways
- Pool facilities – Forest
- Splash Pads – washroom facilities attached – Forest
- Outdoor Rink – Grand Bend Area – multi seasonal rinks that could be used as tennis courts or pickleball spring, summer and fall
- Community Events – volunteer burn-out, community engagement to build up volunteers
- Reduce bureaucratic red-tape the establishment of new and recurring events

**Strategy:**

- Transportation – expanded paved shoulders into road design to facilitate bicycle routes
- Beach – More activities – volleyball, water activities
- Outdoor recreation – outdoor rink, multi-seasonal (hockey in winter, tennis and pickleball in summer); diversify use of under-utilized facilities to include other sports
- Community Centre – light recreational cultural hub
- Established programming to include all age groups – tots to seniors.
- Work with area groups for promotion and utilization of walking trails within Lambton Shores

**Recreation & Cultural Strategy**

- Information Exchange – improve communication flow to generate more awareness
- First Nations – Cultural partner – mutual benefits

### 3. TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

This key performance area is wide ranging and interlinked. The perennial issue of parking and transportation was discussed with focus on previously highlighted possible resolutions included in an earlier report - *2011 Parking & Congestion in Grand Bend Report* (report available for download at [www.grandbenchamber.ca/publications](http://www.grandbenchamber.ca/publications)).

The group moved through a SWOT analysis and focused a lot of comment on Lambton Shores overall declining population, while Grand Bend itself was increasing. While housing prices remain relatively balanced in most of Lambton Shores, Grand Bend's housing prices were identified as a threat in attempting to attract young families. With unbalanced population growth (south to north, mature versus young), there will be challenges trying to maintain services at acceptable levels. Additionally, seasonal residents were viewed as affecting business cycles – perhaps not in a positive way – when the Municipality is trying to attract year-round businesses. New residents may lose their “network”, but this also creates opportunities to start new ones – perhaps with a “new comers club” or new resident “welcome package” from the Municipality itself (could be provided online at LambtonShores.ca).

Opportunities to attract younger families hinged on affordable housing, daycare, education and children's activities.

Discussed as a stand-alone issue, economic development recommendations focused primarily on infrastructure with agreement on the need to create an economic development office and hire an economic development officer. In turn, with the appropriate application of budget, it was felt the economic development officer would be able to recruit new businesses into the area and assist new business start-ups. For real economic development gains to be realized, position creation, strategy action and budget were deemed essential.

In addition, it was felt more needed to be done to make the downtown cores of Lambton Shores communities attractive and successful in retaining businesses. There was some thought that perhaps there would be grants available to the Municipality to offset these costs. Several attendees had also attended Roger Brooks presentation on *The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Destination* and stated that now the more expensive elements had been implemented (at least in Grand Bend with concrete floral containers, benches, street light standards and Forest's decorative street banners etc.), supporting programs and actions could be implemented to complete the project.

Finally, a greater sense of community was seen as a means of encouraging local residents to shop local first. A wide variety of products and services are available within Lambton Shores, especially when the two major retail cores of Grand Bend and Forest are considered. Attendees admitted local residents from the southern and northern ends of the Municipality tend not to travel the short 20-minutes drive back and forth between Forest and Grand Bend to access what cannot be obtained in their “home” community. Amalgamation is now almost 15 years old, but a greater sense of unity amongst Lambton Shores individual communities has not yet solidified. Overcoming this division was seen as step to strengthening local business and employment opportunities and contributing to economic development generally.

This discussion naturally led into the issue of transportation difficulties in that currently there is no public transportation linking the communities. A shuttle bus running within Lambton Shores communities was seen as a method of creating cultural and retail linkages.

Community linkage with Stony & Kettle Point First Nations in terms of developing economic partnerships was also suggested as being beneficial to the entire Municipality. Great potential exists with Kettle Point and their current projects underway and new initiatives in the pipeline. While any economic development must be sensitive to the First Nations concern not to commercialize their culture or community, the planned cultural heritage projects would likely attract many of today's tourists seeking authentic and culturally diverse experiences. Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation's (OTMPC) marketing research identifies these tourists as "Connected Explorers", "Up & Coming Explorers" and "Knowledge Seekers" (Source: [www.tourismpartners.com/publications/Home/MarketingStrategy\\_2014-2015.pdf](http://www.tourismpartners.com/publications/Home/MarketingStrategy_2014-2015.pdf)).

**The groups' consensus was as follows:**

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

##### **1. Remedy congestion along highway 21**

- a. Council is conducting two traffic studies during the 2015 summer to come up with recommendations for highway 21 and especially at the bridge immediately south of Grand Bend's main intersection (Highway 21 & Main Street).
- b. Widen the Highway 21 & Main Street bridge
- c. Install scramble traffic lights for pedestrian safety and flow

##### **2. Parking & Transportation**

- a. Improve utilization of existing lots
  - i. Install colour-coded signage to highlight parking locations and daily rates
  - ii. Provide shuttle service along corridors to move people between lots and destinations/communities
  - iii. Look at ways to discount parking based on purchases, for example like London Covent Market model
  - iv. Enable the first 30 minutes as free parking
  - v. Investigate digital signage

##### **3. Economic Development**

- a. Improve signage and wayfinding to inform people of attractions, retail and restaurants

- i. Explore status of Lambton County' Branding Initiative project, TODS and Wayfinding plans. Implement signage as soon as possible to drive commerce.
  - b. Find projects common to Lambton Shores and First Nations to tap into more funding opportunities.
  - c. Employ an Economic Development Officer to move the EDAP forward. Success from Huron County points to the opportunities we are missing (Reference *Community Economic Revitalization Committee* Projects). Geoff Greening (Sarnia Lambton Economic Partnership) allocated 20% of his time to community development in Lambton Shores. Need to get an update on his priorities and projects.
  - d. Re-establish Economic Development Committee/Board to move elements of the *Economic Development Action Plan* forward. Add members that can translate the EDAP strategy to execution mode.
4. **Affordable housing** - to attract younger families in Grand Bend Area.
5. **Review development fees** - model for new lower-cost, higher-density housing.

#### **Quotes from Supporting Documents**

*"80% of economic growth is generated by retention and expansion of existing businesses... develop programs and strategies that facilitate business growth and development...Be proactive and focused on retaining and expanding small to medium size businesses and promotion of entrepreneurial development."* (Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing plan, pg. 15)

*"Pro-active development can be accomplished by providing support services and counseling to existing businesses and promoting entrepreneurship and business planning for seasonal business."* (Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing plan, pg. 15)

*"Cash-in-Lieu...one of the few flexible instruments the municipality possesses that could directly stimulate development and tax base."* (Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing plan, pg. 46)

*Cash-in-Lieu changes:*

- *Dedicate % of parking spaces in Municipal lots to developers*
  - *Increase parking revenues via parking meters on Main Street*
  - *Reduce Cash-in-Lieu charges to stimulate development*
  - *Reduce rate by a % of "increases" in assessment level*
  - *Amortize payment over period of time*
  - *Reduce charges in consideration for landscaping of architectural significance and design*
- (Greater Grand Bend Region Strategic Marketing plan, pg. 46)

#### **4. POLITICAL STRUCTURE**

This key performance area discussed the Municipality's ward structure and it was noted this may operate as efficiently with two less councilors and instead electing more "at large" councilors. The "at

large” councilors would still be region specific, for example one councilor each for combined Wards 1 & 2, Wards 4 & 5 and Wards 3, 6 & 7. In addition, there would be one councilor specific to “south of the cut” and one for “north of the cut”.

As part of the municipal ward structure and human resource personnel needs, there was discussion around the need for a marketing and promotions staff position. This would be a newly created role that would be a contract position and assessed on an annual basis. This discussion segued to the agreement, based on current visitor traffic statistics, that the Lambton Heritage Museum was an underutilized facility. In order to make it more of an attraction, the County needs to allocate more resources or partner with other groups to increase visitor traffic. Examples provided included historical re-enactment groups and involvement of local First Nations to increase programming and vibrancy.

With ongoing *Centre Ipperwash Beach* discussions between the Municipality and the Kettle & Stony Point First Nation (KSPFN), the group discussed the possibility of the Municipality taking the lead in speaking and working with the Ministry of Natural Resources to enable KSPFN to take over management of *Centre Ipperwash Beach* parking lots and washrooms, which have been allowed to grow into disrepair. This idea was suggested by Lorraine George from KSPFN.

**The groups’ consensus was as follows:**

**WARD STRUCTURE CHANGE**

- One councilor – elected north of “the cut” (Pinery Provincial Park northwards)
- One councilor – elected south of “the cut”
- Three councilors – elected At Large
- Mayor – at large
- Deputy-Mayor – at large

**LAMBTON HERITAGE MUSEUM**

- County to allocate more resources and budget to increase visitor traffic
- Historical re-enactment groups / Increase programming and vibrancy

**BEACH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

- Ministry of Natural Resources must be encouraged to meet with Stony & Kettle Point First Nations (KSPFN) to develop an agreement/arrangement to manage existing MNR parking lots
  - Perhaps MNR could provide capital funding and KSPFN could handle parking lot operations and operational budget

## APPENDICES

### TOURISM

**What is – “Tourism Services”:** Marketing, promoting and “selling” an area to potential visitors for pleasure and business as a preferred travel destination. Marketing tools include visitor guides, guides for event and meeting planners and tour operators, attracting and hosting travel writers, website, and marketing and advertising campaigns (electronic and print).

**What is – “Visitor Services”:** Year-round advice and face-to-face information counseling, access to area maps, brochures and services that help a visitor plan their time and locate tourism product. Includes information about events, festivals, attractions.

**Welcome Centre:** helps 11,642 people annually via emails, phone calls and in-person inquiries. Estimated value of this activity relative to local visitor spend is \$1.5-million.

#### How Many Tourists Visit Lambton Shores? What Are They Worth to the Local Economy?

VISITORS BY TOURISM ASSET	CALCULATED LOCAL SPEND
600,000 people visit Pinery Provincial Park annually	\$5.7 million
60,000 people attend the Grand Bend Motorplex events	\$10.8 million
41,000 people attend Huron Country Playhouse	\$14 million
23,000 people attend Canada Day in Grand Bend	\$2.8 million
11,642 people helped by Welcome Centre	\$1.5 million
10,451 people visit Lambton Heritage Museum	\$2.2 million
7,000 people frequent Grand Bend's Farmers' Market	\$468,000
2,700 people attend the Studio Tour (multi-town)	\$401,000
1,000 people go to Aquafest	\$67,000
816 bird enthusiasts attend Return of the Tundra Swans	\$75,800
750 attend Winter Carnival	\$50,000
500 attend Forest Garden Show	\$43,000

\*\*Dollar values based on Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's "Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model" calculator (calculates tourist spend for accommodation, food, retail, transportation/gas and area attractions).

#### How Are Tourism & Visitor Services Provided to Lambton Shores

1. **Regional Level - Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation** (swotc.ca / ontariosouthwest.com). Established 2011. Tagline – “*Shaped by Nature*”. Located: Woodstock, Ontario. Organization seeks to provide access to information, link tourism assets across county lines and offer a value proposition that benefits the region. **Primary Focus:** Winery / Culinary, Motorcycling, Festivals, Waterfront. **Secondary Focus:** Birding, Cycling, Agri-Tourism, Camping. **Funding Model:** Provincial Government. **Focus:** Region-wide.
2. **County Level – Tourism Sarnia Lambton** (tourismsarnialambton.com). Established 2000. Tagline – “*Navigate to Great Times in Lambton County.*” Located: Sarnia, Ontario. County’s destination marketing organization. **Funding Model:** Mixed – Government & Advertising revenue. **Focus:** County-wide.
3. **Municipal Level – Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce** (grandbendtourism.com). Established 1957. Tagline – “*It starts at the beach.*” Located: Grand Bend, Ontario. **Primary Target Groups:** 45+

Adults & Young Families. **Funding Model:** Member supported / Minimal Municipal Support **Focus:** Lambton Shores.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The boundaries of SWOTC and TSL end on the Lambton Shores side of County Road 81, separating Huron Country Playhouse, Grand Bend Motorplex, and Oakwood Resort from “Grand Bend” or Lambton Shores assets. These attractions are located in Huron County and fall under the jurisdiction of RTO 4 (Huron, Perth, Waterloo, Wellington) and Huron Tourism Association. Funding, strategies, and support follow government boundaries.

**History:** the “Grand Bend Region” has been a vacation destination since late 1800s; in 1800s and turn of 20<sup>th</sup> C it was possible to get here by public transport; Canada Summer Games 2001; London’s Norma Jean’s stopped transportation to Grand Bend in 2010; today’s tourist can easily buy an all-inclusive vacation in a southern climate as they can travel within Ontario; greater competition in tourism;

**Tourist Demographics:** 50% of all of Lambton County’s tourist-based businesses are in Lambton Shores (Sarnia Lambton Economic Partnership); **Visitors to our area are primarily** Ontarians visiting friends & family (44%) or on family vacations (39%), they fall into two groups – the largest are 45-65 years old (43%) and 25-44 years old (30%) – travelling as family groups, either parents with children or multi-generational groups (grandparents – parents – grandchildren); 15-24 year olds account for only 11% of travelling public to SW-Ontario (Ministry of Tourism, Sport & Culture);

<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	
<b>Favourable</b>	<b>Unfavourable</b>
<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Flag Beach and Marinas (GB &amp; Port Franks) / Lake Huron</li> <li>• Lifeguards</li> <li>• Extensive outdoor recreation &amp; natural areas</li> <li>• Arts &amp; Culture</li> <li>• Dining</li> <li>• Accommodation</li> <li>• Retail</li> <li>• Proximity to larger centres</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government boundaries carve-up tourism attractions instead of viewing as a whole</li> <li>• No public transit to or within area</li> <li>• Short tourist season of core asset</li> <li>• Tourism unfriendly regulations (Beach Usage Bylaw, restricted business access to sidewalk)</li> <li>• No clear marketing strategy or plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define size of current market (count visits),</li> <li>• Utilize assets,</li> <li>• Develop partnerships</li> <li>• Encourage Kettle Pt. &amp; Stoney Pt First Nation develop park to world class standards</li> <li>• New immigrant interest in First Nations culture &amp; history</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competing beach-based communities (domestic / foreign)</li> <li>• Under allocation of funds for economic development</li> <li>• Cultural / Community Conflict</li> <li>• Perceptions becoming reality (i.e. “GrandBenders” threatening return of families; major media reporting we’re open Victoria Day and closed after Labour Day)</li> <li>• Residents vs Businesses</li> </ul>



**RECREATION & CULTURE**

**Overview of Assets:**

**Recreation:** Modern Arenas, Acceptable sports fields? (check this), World class beaches, Blue Flag, Vibrant sports associations?

**Culture:** Live theatre, Kineto Movie Theatre, multiple galleries, dozens of artists, Creative County Fund, Paint Ontario, Heritage Museum, Pinery Theatre, Esli Dodge Conservation Area (natural amphitheatre), Kettle Pt. & Stony Pt. First Nations (PowWow), meeting areas community centre (except in Grand Bend – which uses the Legion & School)

**History:** Recent upgrades – i.e. Klondyke for soccer, playground, Grand Bend baseball, two arenas. Canada Summer Games (2001), new Beach house, Volleyball fiasco, Beach Usage Policy & Rates. Loss of Ipperwash park use. (Important to note the need for the capacity to return for use by the Kettle Pt & Stony Pt First Nation as an asset we can all benefit from.)

**Talking Points:**

- Outdoor rink needs municipal land downtown (Grand Bend)
- Community Centre / Cultural Centre – space needs to be identified
- Volleyball training camp needed
- Heritage Museum - budget & programming needs improvement; Expand arts & education
- Young people needed to feed recreation programs

<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	
<b>Favourable</b>	<b>Unfavourable</b>
<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good basic infrastructure on sports</li> <li>• Best market in rural SW Ontario for art, theatre, music, culture.</li> <li>• Best beach on Lake Huron</li> <li>• Water Quality</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catchment areas for hockey and baseball (maybe soccer) are different for north and south.</li> <li>• Pinery,</li> <li>• Kettle Pt &amp; Stoney Pt First Nation, Forest, GB all operate independent of one another.</li> <li>• Business/resident conflict on entertainment, volleyball, Ipperwash</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Near limitless, this area is where discussion should take place, especially on BEACH Volleyball.</li> <li>• Also recommend Kettle Pt. &amp; Stoney Pt First</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inertia,</li> <li>• Cultural groups clashing,</li> <li>• Population shrinkage could render arenas surplus,</li> </ul>

<p>Nation develop park to world class standards (eyes of Canada are on them to do well).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Centre in GB in planning stages, currently has no municipal support.</li> <li>• MARVEL school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current parking revenues not enough to fund Blue Flag, Lifeguards, etc.</li> <li>• Too much capacity in south, too little in north</li> </ul>
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**TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Overview:** Official plan near completion. Many building lots available for GB and Forest. Farmland protected, nature areas protected.

Areas of discussion: Bridgework, stay in front of sewerage, highway upgrades.

Detail how one restaurant employs the equivalent of 20 full timers. Is this an industry?

One restaurant pays nearly 10% of its sales in HST. Is this worth highlighting?

Marvel? Education infrastructure as a driver of economic growth.

**Talking Points**

- How can we detail financial losses from congestion, power failures etc.
- How many visitors do we get
- Ipperwash / Kettle-Point sewers project with Plympton-Wyoming (i.e. hook up to Plympton-Wyoming’s system in order to serve entire lakeshore from “the cut” south
- Development charges big problem in southern part of municipality (re: population growth)

<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	
<b>Favourable</b>	<b>Unfavourable</b>
<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New sewer plant,</li> <li>• Restaurant growth leads employment growth</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonality causes problems with sustainable employment, infrastructure utilization, maintenance of hotels.</li> <li>• Population changes reduce employment in service sectors.</li> <li>• Power failures.</li> <li>• Bridge and highway shortcomings negatives out of our control.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two Year action during previous term of Economic Development Committee (use EDAP as prop &amp; guideline)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality’s “North” growth running up against sewer capacity,</li> <li>• Municipality’s “South” losing population.</li> </ul>

**POLITICAL STRUCTURE**

**Overview:** amalgamation, wards, county boards (Tourism Sarnia Lambton, Sarnia Lambton Economic Partnership, Lambton County Creative Fund, Lambton Museums, Roads, Health Unit, old age, etc).

Realign wards to begin introduction of “member at large” system and larger wards. 2 members each from 3 large wards or 3 members at large and 2 wards of two members.

**Partnership development:** Parks Commission or “Friends of” type arrangement can work in some locations to bridge public policy requirements with commercial imperatives, grants, and opportunities.

Event coordinator can be developed on cost neutral basis, w. two or three year contracts, measurable outcomes. Municipal parking revenue, advertising, gate receipts all contribute. See Port Elgin Pumkinfest.

Municipal and County government needs to outline preferred outcomes, develop policy that allows or changes policy that hinders outcomes. This group to develop specific recommendations.

**Talking Points**

- Kettle Point – Stony Point First Nations partner on parking – methodologies / rates / signage
- Integrate heritage museum programming with MARVEL, art tours / summer camps
- Big Tent (everyone working together)

<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	
<b>Favourable</b>	<b>Unfavourable</b>
<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional staff development,</li> <li>• Lower overall costs,</li> <li>• Councillors have detailed understanding of their ward issues.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County boards/agencies lack direct responsiveness at community level.</li> <li>• Ward reps in amalgamated municipality risk representing “old” issues without understanding “new” issues</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef up Heritage museum to become a real attraction of its own</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ???</li> </ul>