

DECEMBER 21, 2023

PLANNING FOR GROWTH



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Introduction

- How should the County set up planning and economic development to make sure we get the most out of the Amazon Fulfillment Centre, the PowerCo SE Gigafactory, and other related investments that are expected to boost our community and economy?
- These developments are generating significant economic activity and increasing land demand in the area.
- We would like to maximize the benefits for our communities through careful planning.
- The goal of today's presentation is to help you define the growth that you want in West Elgin and Elgin County.

THE POWERCO SE GIGAFACTORY EFFECT

- The PowerCo SE Gigafactory is not just a factory; it's a catalyst for economic change.
- It's expected to create 3,000 direct jobs and thousands more indirect jobs. There could be as many as 30,000 new jobs.
- Increased job competition and population growth will have a regional impact.



Competition for Investments & Skilled Labour

- Elgin County, St. Thomas, London, and beyond will be competing for ancillary-type industrial investments.
- As businesses flock to our region, skilled labour competition will intensify.
- This influx of jobs will attract a diverse range of people.
- Assessing workforce needs and investing in training are crucial.
- Existing businesses need support amid all this development.

Factors for Consideration

- To support this growth, careful financial and land use planning is essential to support the demands of housing, business (industrial and commercial), agriculture and recreation.
- Infrastructure upgrades are necessary for accommodating population and business growth.
- Housing affordability and supply, transportation, education, healthcare, public safety, recreation, and other social services must be addressed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Aligning developments with community priorities is vital.
- Welcoming newcomers and immigrants ensures our communities remain safe and inclusive places, where all residents thrive.
- Community engagement plays a pivotal role in achieving this.



Benefits of Growth

- Industrial growth offers tax revenue, job creation, economic stimulation, and improved infrastructure.
- An increase in industrial tax revenue will support the increase in service levels required by population growth.
- It enhances property values and fosters community vibrancy.
- Sustainable and well-planned growth is essential for long-term benefits.

Preparing for Development

We need to understand the type and level of growth desired.

- Do you want to attract new residents?
- Do you want to attract and grow your commercial businesses?
- Do you want to attract and grow your industrial tax base?
- What kinds of incentives will be needed to attract these investments? Is the proximity to PowerCo SE sufficient incentive or are additional incentives needed to compete with neighbouring municipalities?

Discussion

- What is the appetite in your community to welcome investment?
- How aggressively would you like to pursue growth?
- In terms of incentives to attract businesses, how aggressive do you think we should be?
- How welcoming will our communities be to newcomers? What steps can we take to ensure inclusivity and a smooth transition for newcomers?

Costs

- Growth involves costs to different levels of government and across the public and private sector.
 - Municipal – water, wastewater, planning, roads, cultural services, emergency services, parks and recreation, etc.
 - School Boards – planning for and building new schools, recruiting staff for new schools
 - Private – housing development, commercial development, industrial development
- Economic development expenses include business attraction efforts and workforce development initiatives.
- Effective financial planning is crucial for project sustainability.

Funding Sources

- Diverse funding sources are essential to support growth.
- Funding sources for infrastructure development include property taxes, grants, debentures, development charges, and user fees.
- Partnerships with other municipalities.
- Public-private partnerships and regional initiatives can also provide funds.
- What expectations should we have regarding financial support from the provincial and federal governments?

Discussion

- How much are you willing to invest to drive growth forward?
- Where do you see opportunities for collaboration between the Local Municipalities, the County, and the City; and when might we find ourselves in competition?
- When it comes to infrastructure, do you think it's feasible for us to make shared investments in key areas like water, wastewater, road networks, rail, public transportation etc.?

Supporting Existing Businesses: Business Retention & Expansion

- Growth presents opportunities and challenges for our existing businesses.
- They may have opportunities to supply PowerCo SE with materials, but they may also be in competition for employees.
- Launched in November 2023, **our BR+E program will support existing businesses.**
- The goal is to understand local business challenges and opportunities through business visits and confidential interviews.
- The program aims to **strengthen relationships** with existing businesses and **address immediate concerns.**
- The BR+E program will focus on various sectors, including, industrial, commercial, and agriculture.
- The program will be overseen by a dedicated Leadership Team comprised of representatives from each Local Municipality.

Creating an Investment Attraction Roadmap

- We have submitted an application to FedDev for a grant to develop and implement an investment attraction strategy.
- The goal is to position Elgin County for industrial growth and to attract new investments.
- The project includes:
 - clarifying goals with our Local Municipal Partners,
 - updating vacant land inventory,
 - completing a master servicing study,
 - identifying parcels ready for development,
 - addressing servicing gaps,
 - updating incentives,
 - streamlining planning processes,
 - developing a workforce attraction and retention plan, and
 - creating a marketing and lead generation strategy.

Next Steps

- 1.What are your goals for residential growth, commercial expansion, and industrial development?
- 2.How do you want to engage with your community to assess its appetite for welcoming growth?
- 3.What is your plan to support infrastructure development (e.g. roads, water, etc.) to accommodate the desired growth?
- 4.How will you support the costs of new infrastructure? Property taxes, grants, debentures, development charges, user fees, partnerships with neighboring municipalities, public-private partnerships?
- 5.How can you champion the BR+E program and provide support to existing businesses?
- 6.Would you like to work with us to develop and implement an investment attraction strategy for the region?

Planning Options

What structure and investments in planning and economic development are needed to support the desired growth?

Commitment to review planning options

- Oxford, Middlesex and Huron County
- Paul Hicks, Republic

Middlesex, Oxford and Huron Counties

Common elements

- Planning staff are employed by the County.
- Planning staff are assigned to Local Municipalities based on volume of work, e.g., a community with high volume planning might have two or more staff assigned to do their planning work or two communities that have low volume might share a single planner.

Middlesex, Oxford and Huron Counties

- Planners have offices in the communities to which they are assigned.
 - In addition to their primary office in the Local Municipality planning staff may have office space at the County building or WFH.
- County levy covers the cost of the service.

Staff Assignment

- Middlesex rotates planners in the different Municipalities, whereas Huron and Oxford more often keep the planners serving the same community.
 - Rotating the planners builds capacity and new skills that support professional development.
 - Maintaining planners offers continuity.

Oxford County

- County planning services include
 - developing one Official Plan for the County (that includes all LMPs), and
 - statutory duties, Secondary Plans, zoning and site plan approvals.
- Costs distributed through County Levy, no area rating, allocation of planning staffing is weighted based on population.

Middlesex County

- Development was iterative – voluntary participation.
- Pooled planning offers broader and deeper set of skills and support to LMP and County planning decisions.
- Junior Planners are assigned a wide variety of duties and receive mentoring and support from senior planners.
- Financial growth support by \$10M investment reserve, that offers 8 year, interest free loans to LMPs.
 - LMP must invest a minimum 10% stake

Huron County

- Succession planning – new grads from Guelph, mentored by senior rural planners.
- Promote hybrid model, planners working from home, LMP (min. 1 day/week) and County (shared space model).
- Planners shifted based on fit, same planner does both the LMP and County planning for a given file (delegated responsibility, allows for shorter response time).
- Economic Development used to report to Director, Planning, now reports to the CAO.
- Planning Services includes a Climate Change Officer and a Forestry Conservation Officer.

Additional Considerations

- Feedback from Paul Hicks, A/Manager Planning, Elgin County
- Consider Central Elgin / St. Thomas Planning Services
- What do LMP and County Councils want for community development and growth in the next five to ten years? What are they prepared to invest to support the desired growth?
- What is the capacity of our consolidated current planning staff? What additional skills and experience are needed?
- Other?

Next Steps

- Confirm timing and expectations.
- Seeking direction from Councils regarding their desired growth plans.
- Seeking direction from Councils regarding the preferred model for Planning Services .
- Considering direction and support required for economic development.