

# **Township of Perth South Community Strategic Plan**

## **SWOT Analysis: Examining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats**

**Strategic Planning  
Perth South, Perth County  
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# BY TOPIC:

## 1. Culture of the Township

### Strengths

- Recreation: Large recreation area for activities within the community (St. Mary's Community Theatre, Stratford Festival, Youth sport programs)
- People: Strong sense of a community and rural identity with friendly, down-to-earth people, excellent work ethic, and diversity.
- Service clubs (Rotary, Optimists, Senior citizens' Community Centre, and Women's Institute)
- Tourism: Potential for agricultural tourism with the practice of traditional farming methods, community heritage with founding families and heritage buildings

### Weaknesses

- People: A small population with little political clout within the County. Declining population, no welcome wagon for newcomers, and lack of cultural diversity.
- Resources: Lack of places to live, senior mobility, housing and accessibility.
- Tension between rural folk and town folk, for example, garbage dumping.
- 'Baby brother' syndrome in reference to the city of Stratford
- Physical separation between town and country, attitudes of neighbouring urban communities.

### Opportunities

- Tourism: Existing heritage sites utilized for camping and local events, like Jamboree. Proximity to hospital, sports, family requirements, and cultural centres (Stratford theatre, Grand Bend Beach).
- Recreation: Improve biking routes, trails and pathways, weekend tours, revival of Kirkton Garden Party, and winter recreation like curling, ice rinks.
- Artisan and craft development.
- Activities at local school, swimming pool, restaurants

### Threats

- Loss of rural community and identity, declining awareness of rural life, young people leaving for education, population decline, growing trend of small families.
- No political clout due to small population.
- Zoning by-laws, planning and political process limit development and expansion
- Highway expansion around the transport corridor destroying agricultural land
- Hospitals and small schools closing, pressure from globalization on rural schools.
- Large agri-business for low population
- Newcomers not assimilating cultural norms

## 2. Economic Development

### Strengths

- Resources: Agricultural land very valuable (Ontario's prime farm soils), minerals and raw materials, and diversified manufacturing industries.
- Employment: Job opportunities in agriculture, recreation, secondary businesses, manufacturing, and successful family-owned businesses.
- Finance: Reasonable tax rates and no debt.
- Good transportation system passes through the County, for example, roads, railway.
- Restaurants and accommodation (hotels, bed and breakfasts)
- Grocery stores

### Weaknesses

- Political bureaucracy
- Zoning for farming only that supports existing structures, over-protected agricultural land
- Infrastructure: Difficult to start new business outside of farming, lack of infrastructure for new businesses (Sewage plant). Lack of serviced land
- Farmers working two jobs to keep farm going
- Difficulty passing on farm to children (2)
- Narrow revenue base that is not diversified
- Lack of skill set for hi-tech jobs

### Opportunities

- Local processing and value-added businesses, micro-industries.
- Developing businesses in Perth County with agriculture, for example, quarries or pits.
- Potential for green energy (geothermal).
- Zoning by-law amendments.
- Protection of agricultural community, focus on villages
- Attractive for small business, for example, youth-oriented business related to farms
- Tapping into trends such as small farms and market demand for organic produce.
- Improved fertile lands, dairy farms, hog farms.
- Dual farm uses, for example direct marketing off-farm.

### Threats

- Federal and provincial laws which cannot apply to rural Ontario
- Loss of farming land, for example, zoning and the severances of houses continue to threaten farming.
- Small tax base
- Tearing down old houses, population moves away to the city.
- Lack of political clout has meant losing out on economic issues.
- Imported sub-standard food displacing local produce, small farmers cannot compete.
- Financial impact of amalgamation with larger centers has meant losing control.

- No room for further expansion
- Transport corridor threatening wildlife and agriculture

### **3. Environmental Issues and Sustainability**

#### **Strengths**

- Agriculture: Richest agricultural land in the province coupled with good conservation and agricultural practices. For example, crop rotation, nutrient management, and tree-planting.
- Clean air and water,
- Waste management program,
- Sustainability: Renewable energies, recycling program, proactive environmental leaders and educators, Wildwood Conservation Area, Thames River clean-up (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority).

#### **Weaknesses**

- Increased deforestation
- Waste Management: Garbage from the city coming to rural areas, for example, tires. City of Stratford overflowing sewage system (bio-solids, sludge), and Tim Horton's cups.
- Lack of sufficient land
- Infrastructure: Poor road infrastructure, missed opportunity for local hydro.

#### **Opportunities**

- Creative and proactive conservation of the fertile land base.
- Water resources: Conservation of the Avon River, Wild Wood Dam, and aquifers.
- Energy: Develop small-scale wind and solar farms
- Waste Management: Green waste to digester instead of landfill

#### **Threats**

- Increased government regulations
- Waste management: Runoff of bio-sludge from industrial wastewater treatment process into fresh water. Fear of long-term effects of potentially harmful bio-solids and decrease in water quality and quantity. External municipal waste dumping.
- Resources: Highway corridor threatening wildlife and agriculture. Clear-cutting land for agriculture threatens wildlife and biodiversity. Loss of forest coverage
- Thames River Conservation Authority inconsistent with city of London vs. Perth South farmers

## 4. Social:

### Strengths

- Amenities: Health care services with local doctors, dentists and veterinarians. Good rural schools and proximity to post-secondary education.
- People: Strong family backgrounds, strong community support whenever there is a problem, and good neighbours. Self-sufficient community.
- Service clubs charitable functions, good at fundraising and collecting donations for local events and programs.

### Weaknesses

- Distance for youth to get to activities. Also, due to population decline there are fewer family community events or social activities, for example, dances.
- Lack of understanding of rural life, young people losing their sense of community. Social conflict and tension between youth.
- Limited career opportunities
- Inadequate provincial funding
- Garbage dumping and waste management issues.
- Problems of alcoholism and meth labs

### Opportunities

- Promote rural education for urbanites
- Develop and sustain recreational activities and tourism at schools, festivals, and sports events.
- Promote country living with the appeal of a small community. Community centers, community halls
- Take advantage of the proximity to city other centers – St. Mary, Exeter.
- Focus on rural schools and churches
- Expansion of Community centre use
- Individual recognition and promoting the successes of those who contribute to important developments
- Improved service clubs

### Threats

- Declining rural population with an aging population equals a decrease in local sport populations and less youth volunteers
- Lack of opportunities for young people and young people finding it hard to get into farming.

- Small population with a declining sense of community. A loss of rural gathering places and organizations.
- No severances has meant no communities
- Drug problems and abuse