



FINAL BACKGROUND DISCUSSION PAPER  
*for*  
*Birds Creek Secondary Plan*

July 22, 2011



*in collaboration with*

EDP Consulting



July 22, 2011

The Municipality of Hastings Highlands  
33011 Hwy. 62 North  
Maynooth, Ontario  
K0L 2S0

Attention: Frank Mills, CBO/BLEO

**Regarding Background Discussion Paper**

Dear Mr. Mills:

Enclosed, please find our Background Discussion Paper for the Birds Creek Secondary Plan project.

We look forward to presenting the report at an upcoming Steering Committee Meeting and our continued collaboration towards the first draft of the secondary plan. The long-term water and wastewater servicing of Birds Creek will be addressed under separate cover.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at rbaksh@dillon.ca or 613.745.2213 x3049.

Yours sincerely,

**DILLON CONSULTING LIMITED**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rory Baksh", is written over a blue ink scribble.

Rory Baksh, MCIP, RPP  
Associate, Planning & Development

Encl.

5335

Canotek Rd

Suite 200

Ottawa

Ontario

Canada

K1J 9L4

Telephone

(613) 745-2213

Fax

(613) 745-3491

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 BACKGROUND REVIEW	1
2.0 STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES	8
3.0 GAP ANALYSIS	9
4.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION	11
5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	12

### *Appendices*

Natural Environment Existing Conditions Report (July 2011), Dillon Consulting

High Level Commercial Review (July 2011), EDP Consulting

## *INTRODUCTION*

The Corporation of the Municipality of Hastings Highlands is undertaking a secondary plan for the hamlet of Birds Creek which will provide policy guidance for development of the hamlet to the year 2030. It will identify effective and efficient development patterns and opportunities in the hamlet, and will take into account current municipal conditions, reflect Provincial land use planning policy as outlined in the Provincial Policy Statement 2005 (PPS), and co-ordinate with and implement the policies of the Hastings County Official Plan.

This Background Discussion Paper reflects the results of the background review, strengths and opportunities/gap analysis, and public consultation.

### *1.0 BACKGROUND REVIEW*

A review of background reports and some new studies were undertaken to help identify the issues and opportunities in Birds Creek. The following table outlines the key findings from this review and the new studies.

#### Planning and Development Study – Birds Creek Area (January, 2006)

- Economy is primarily resource based, focuses on forestry.
- Town of Bancroft is the regional centre, providing urban amenities.
- The population is concentrated in the 25 to 44 year age cohort (25%).
- The 65+ age group is the second largest cohort (16%).
- There are predominantly commercial uses along Highway 62.
- Birds Creek may experience development pressures moving north up Highway 62, as a result of the build-out in Bancroft.
- There is an industrial core at the south-west corner of the study area.
- The Hastings County forest covers a large area in the centre of the study area.
- All development in the hamlet of Birds Creek is serviced by private services or communal systems. This is limiting for commercial development.
- Highway 62 is the main transportation artery.
- There is a large undeveloped parcel of land lying to the west of Highway 62.
- As Bancroft continues to expand to the north, Bancroft and Birds Creek are becoming one.
- Development is limited by its continuing dependence on private servicing.
- Industrial lands seem to be fully developed; more land designated as rural industrial may be needed if wanting to expand.
- There are large mineral extractive and waste disposal sites just outside the study area to the north off Highway 62.

- It would be very costly to extend municipal piped water and wastewater services from Bancroft to Birds Creek.

#### Natural Environment Fieldwork (June 2011)

- While much of the forested area of Birds Creek provides some limited habitat for wildlife, their floristic diversity and ecological significance is limited.
- The extent of the area zoned for environmental protection is appropriate for the small aquatic and wetland area located north of 'Y' Road; this area contains certain flora and fauna which makes it not suitable for development.
- There are numerous informal trails within the lands referred to as the "County Forest".
- A portion of the "County Forest" is a plantation rather than a naturally occurring woodlot.
- Six provincial Species at Risk have been recorded within the immediate area of Birds Creek.
- There are no provincially significant natural features within Birds Creek.

#### High Level Commercial Review (July 2011)

- Highway 62 commercial area will continue to attract similar uses as what already exists if the area remains unserved.
- Residential areas along Highway 62 should be redeveloped to commercial uses over time.
- Consideration should be given to initiating a Community Improvement Plan for the Highway 62 section of Birds Creek, creating a greater distinction from Bancroft.
- Low population growth limits the demand for major retail uses.
- There appears to be sufficient land designated for future employment uses.
- Small businesses and tourism have been identified as being a core proactive sector for attraction, retention and expansion efforts in the county.
- The 100 acre parcel of land lying to the west of Highway 62 and fronting onto Highway 62 and Y Road is a good location for new commercial development.
- It will be important that these lands are adequately planned, rather than developed on an ad hoc basis.
- The development potential of the County Forest (i.e., block of 175 acres of land that the municipality purchased on the west side of the hamlet) may be particularly attractive for commercial development given that the Town of Bancroft has decided not to proceed with the Build Bancroft Project.

#### Birds Creek Groundwater Characterization Study (September, 2009)

- Domestic use forms the bulk of the total groundwater utilization in the hamlet.
- There are approximately 130 wells in Birds Creek (82 are in low density development within the hamlet).
- The total actual groundwater use for residential purposes is estimated at 47,450 cubic metres a year.
- There is currently approximately ten times the amount of groundwater recharge than the projected water demand.

#### Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment of Birds Creek Secondary Plan (2011)

- No visible features of cultural significance such as historic buildings or cemeteries were observed, although the potential for such exists in less accessible areas.
- There are large areas of high potential physiography in the form of sand spillway plains and property adjacent to waterways and historic transportation routes.
- Some of the areas in Birds Creek for future development will require archaeological assessments.

#### Y Road Development Site

- There is interest in developing a 1 to 2 acre lot in order to build an office building for an expanding business.

#### Hastings Highlands Bus Route Tuesdays Brochure

- There is rural transit service to/from Bancroft for Birds Creek residents.
- Service Mondays to Thursdays – morning, midday and evening service.
- Service goes up Highway 62 and does the loop around Birds Creek.

#### Harvest Hastings Guide of Local Food and Products Brochure

- No specific location in Birds Creek for purchasing local food, however, there are locations directly south in Bancroft where local food can be purchased.

#### Demographic Study and Vacant Land Analysis – North Hastings Market Area (February, 2008)

- Development at the north end of Bancroft is resulting in a cross-boundary sprawl northward along Highway 62 into Birds Creek.
- There are 365 lots within the hamlet; 86 vacant lots on maintained roads (6 lots are partially constrained by natural hazards/heritage features).



Accommodation and Food Services);

- Retail; Manufacturing; Construction; Health Care;
- Education

#### Hastings County Economic Development Situation Analysis (Background Report to the Economic Development Plan) (August 2008)

- Core proactive sectors for attraction, retention and expansion efforts:
  - Agriculture & related activities;
  - Forestry and related activities;
  - Mining;
  - Tourism;
  - Small businesses (retail);
  - Creative industries (arts, culture etc.);
  - Manufacturing (dairy product and wood product manufacturing)
- Non core proactive sectors:
  - Construction, healthcare, and education

#### Hastings County Investment Attraction Strategy 2010-2012 (August, 2009)

- There is an absence of persons within the younger key labour market cohorts (20-34). The large downward swell indicates that there are plenty of young but many are not staying in the county to live.
- Hastings County needs to emphasize the capacity of the regional labour pool as well as needs to look at job creation in order to retain youth.
- There is currently four times the inventory for vacant commercial/industrial land as there is land containing commercial and industrial buildings available for future development.
- High areas of opportunities: "Lone Eagles", workers with highly transportable skills such as writers, accountants, artists etc. who wish to move to smaller communities for a better quality of life including open space, natural amenities and fresh air.
- High areas of opportunities: Increase opportunities for Value Added Agri Products. Encourage entrepreneurs to invest in new opportunities as well as attracting people to relocate to the County to pursue new agri-food opportunities such as artisan cheese making or micro brewing.
- Moderate areas of opportunity: tourism investment in trails, hunting, fishing and resort development opportunities.
- Moderate areas of opportunity: Maintain Main Street Commercial sector helps create the unique identity elements of character that draws visitors to downtown areas.
- Moderate areas of opportunity: Forestry and Wood Products, northern area of the county.

#### Hastings County Premier Ranked Tourist Destinations (June, 2010)

- Core attractors to Hastings County: outdoor experience; rocks and minerals; arts culture and heritage; picturesque villages.
- Supporting attractors: motor sports; agri-tourism, culinary tourism.

#### Hastings County Business Retention and Expansion Report (February 2009)

- Within the next 3 years, it is anticipated that there will be some expansion of firms in Hastings County; most firms surveyed anticipate that business expansion will lead to an increase in workforce, additional investment in equipment and process improvements and additional services for customers.
- The greatest impediments to expansion of existing businesses and the development of new businesses were availability of skilled labour, lack of proactive new business recruitment by the municipality and availability of financing.

#### Bancroft Wastewater Treatment Plant Environmental Study Report (2005)

- The wastewater serviced area in Bancroft was expanded to service commercial and residential developments to the north of the existing serviced area.
- The closest pumping station to Birds Creek is to be located approximately 300 metres south of Highway 62 & York River Drive.

#### Canada's Creative Corridor Report

- The creative economy is an economy driven by knowledge and innovation; it employs creative workers who work across all industries and sectors, including manufacturing and agriculture.
- Overall, there is a greater share of workers in Eastern Ontario employed in creative occupations relative to the province as a whole.
- While not growing as fast as larger urban areas, rural areas and small urban centres are also experiencing double-digit growth in creative economy employment.

#### Issues and Options – Official Plan Review – County of Hastings (October, 2007)

- While the OP should encourage appropriate development, it should also protect environmental features and functions. A County natural heritage strategy, sustainable forests by-law, source water protection policies, policies to permit alternative energy conservation designs and facilities were all mentioned.
- Interest in the development of home occupations.
- It was important that they maintain the character of the rural areas in order to conserve the resources that attract quality development.
- Rural parcels should be larger, with wider frontages.
- An aging population will require higher density forms of residential development. Source water protection will make developments based on individual wells more challenging in

rural areas. More emphasis should be placed on maintaining rural areas for rural oriented uses, such as farming, forestry, tourism and aggregate extraction.

- Forestry companies identified a need for protection of forest resources from over-cutting. Source water protection policies are needed.
- Sufficient lands should be designated to move towards a 60/40 residential to commercial/industrial assessment mix.
- A separation should be maintained between rural residential and rural land uses.
- Aging population will need new forms of recreational facilities, affordable housing, disability access, community and health facilities, public transportation etc.

#### Agriculture and Agritourism in Hastings County – Changes and Trends for Selected Statistics (May, 2008)

- The number of farms in Hastings County has declined over the years.
- However, the remaining farms are getting bigger in size.
- The average operator age in Hastings County is approx. 52 years old.
- Cattle farming and field crops were the two most dominant farm types in Hastings County in 2001.
- Livestock and poultry are becoming more intensive in Hastings County.
- Pig farms and hen and chicken operations have become more intensive.
- The number of animals per farm has increased dramatically.

#### Energy Conservation Report – County of Hastings (May, 2008)

- County of Hastings OP should be consistent with the Planning Act and the PPS. Should reflect new policies and facilitate implementation of energy conscious transportation strategies, urban form and site design.
- Incorporate energy conservation in the planning and design of neighbourhoods and homes: higher densities, solar orientation, use of LEED, Landscaping, intensification, increased pedestrians, cyclists and public transit, retrofit existing housing and building stock, incorporate renewable energy systems into various forms of development.

#### Forest Background Report – County of Hastings (May, 2008)

- The forestry sector still directly employs 585 people in the County of Hastings.
- 125 people were employed directly in forestry and logging.
- Employment in wood product manufacturing totalled 450 jobs in 2001, 160 of which were at sawmills and in wood preservation.
- 10,871 acres of forest in Hastings Highlands participate in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program.

Mines Minerals Aggregates Report – County of Hastings (May, 2008)

- Hastings Highlands contains Class '1' material; good development potential and may provide high quality aggregate.

The above information was considered through a consultation-driven strengths and opportunities analysis which is described in Section 2.0 of this report.

## **2.0 STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

During the public consultation visioning workshop (refer to Section 4.0 for further details), participants were asked to identify the strengths and opportunities from the background review in Section 1.0 of this report.

The participants identified the following strengths:

- ✓ Birds Creek's proximity to Bancroft
- ✓ Development is moving north along Highway 62 from Bancroft to Birds Creek
- ✓ Development along Highway 62 is predominantly highway/commercial uses
- ✓ The population is concentrated in the 25 to 44 year age cohort (25%)
- ✓ There is an industrial core at the south-west corner of the study area
- ✓ The Hastings County forest in the centre of the study area
- ✓ The recreation area is a recreation area for all ages
- ✓ The presence of a local rural transit route
- ✓ Minimum of a 1 acre lot is required for each dwelling unit or land use

The participants identified the following opportunities:

- ✓ There is currently approximately ten times the amount of groundwater recharge than the projected water demand
- ✓ The population is concentrated in the 25 to 44 year age cohort (25%)
- ✓ There is an industrial core at the south-west corner of the study area; this area has some vacant land and is a great opportunity to bring in new industries and new jobs
- ✓ There is the opportunity to buy local food in the area
- ✓ The municipality is progressive
- ✓ There are retail opportunities
- ✓ There is an opportunity to expand the tourism and creative industry in the area

The development of the secondary plan will be focused on emphasizing Birds Creek's many strengths and opportunities.

### 3.0 GAP ANALYSIS

A gap analysis was completed in order to respond to the questions, “Where are we going?” and “How far are we from here to there?” The gap analysis has two main components – an existing land use survey and forecasting the future population/housing of Birds Creek.

An existing land use survey of Birds Creek was completed on May 5, 2011. The purpose of the survey was to identify current land uses in Birds Creek. The results of the survey are presented on the next page.

The current population of Birds Creek was determined using the existing number of households, (taken from the land use survey) and the average household size reported for Hastings Highlands in the 2006 Statistics Canada Community Profile.

Existing Number of Households (based on land use survey)	311
Average Household Size in Hastings Highlands (2006)	2.4
Birds Creek 2010 Population	± 750

In 2008, the County of Hastings completed a demographic study and vacant land analysis of the North Hastings Market Area. This Growth Accommodation Report identified the areas within the County where growth should be directed. The report also predicted the growth rate for the North Hastings area.

The Growth Accommodation Report identified the projected population of the North Hastings area for 2010 and 2030, and these population projections have been used to forecast the future growth in Birds Creek for this study. Birds Creek accounts for roughly 6.1% of the North Hastings population. Assuming this proportion will remain fairly constant, the future population of Birds Creek was determined by calculating 6.1% of the 2030 projected population of North Hastings. This results in a future population of ± 850 people in Birds Creek.

	North Hastings	Birds Creek
2010 Population	12,295	± 750
2030 Population	13,918	± 850

It is assumed that the average household size would not change significantly in Birds Creek over the next 20 years. A population growth of ± 100 people in Birds Creek would result in roughly ±42 new dwelling units.

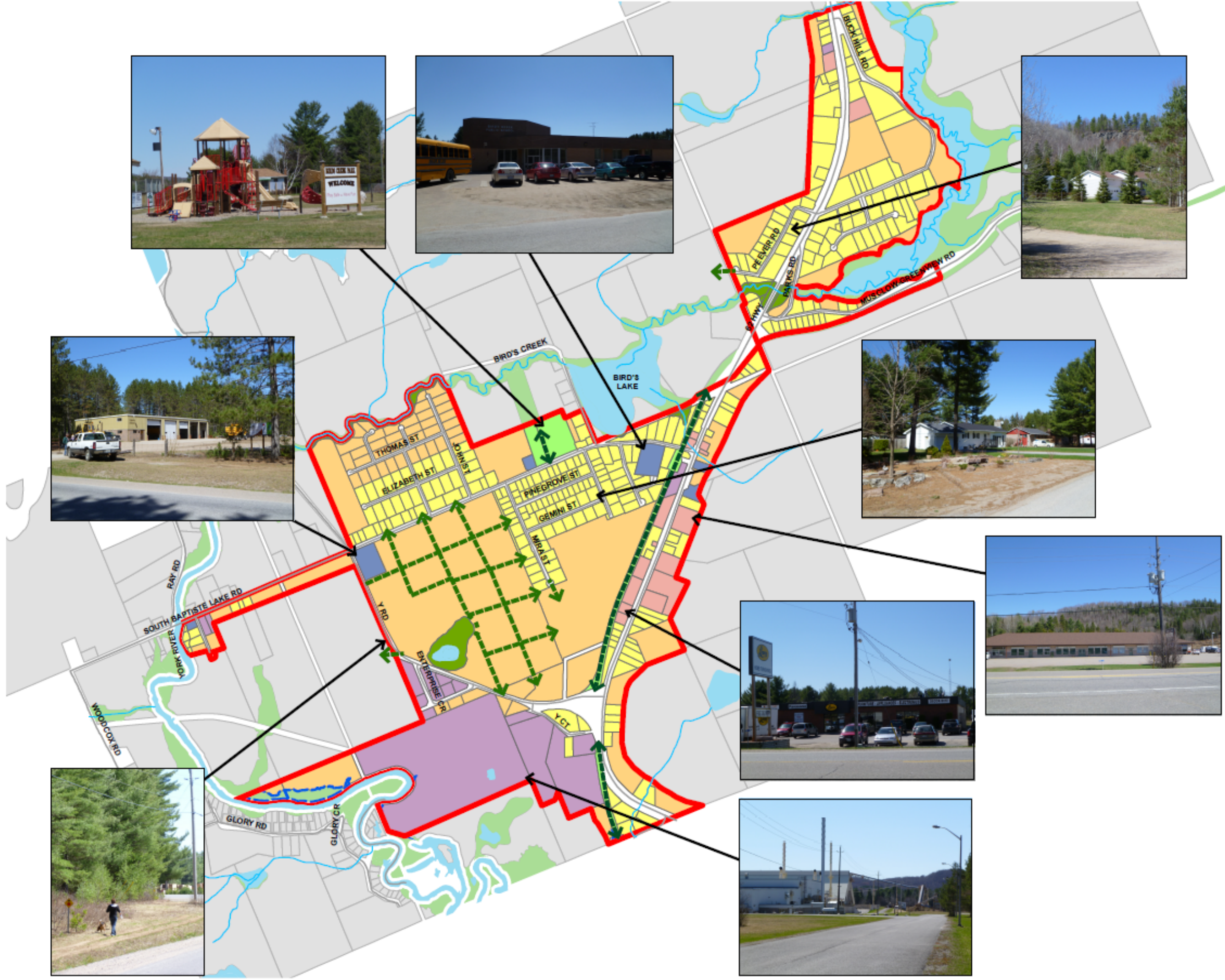
The above forecasts will form the basis of the secondary plan.



## BIRDS CREEK SECONDARY PLAN

### EXISTING LAND USES

- Informal Trail
- Formal Trail
- Roads
- Birds Creek Study Area
- Commercial
- Community Facility
- Environmental Protection
- Floodplain
- Industrial
- Open Space
- Residential
- Vacant/Agriculture



4.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

On June 28, 2011 a "Tomorrow Today" Community Visioning Exercise was held at the Community Centre in Birds Creek. The purpose of this event was to engage stakeholders to develop a variety of 20 year vision statements and to share their strategic directions for their community if they could be "Councillor for a Day".

Highlights of the background review were presented and participants were asked to identify the strengths and opportunities relating to Birds Creek. The results of this exercise have been discussed in Section 2.0.

Following the strengths and opportunities analysis, a visioning exercise was conducted. Participants were first asked to develop their own 20-year vision statement for Birds Creek. Next, participants were divided into two groups and were asked to work together to develop a collective 20-year vision statement that incorporated everyone's ideas. The following are the results of the group vision exercise:

Vision Statement #1 developed by participants:

In 20 years, Birds Creek will "...use the "Y" Road/ByPass/River/Industrial area to develop a centre geared toward industrial/private/public complexes and areas related to tourism, while bringing in new manufacturing for job sustainability."

Vision Statement #2 developed by participants:

In 20 years, Birds Creek will be "...sustainable with carefully developed small industry and service sectors off of 'Y' Road complementing the residential areas. Birds Creek is also a hub for recreation, culture and special events for local residents and tourists."

From these vision statements it is evident that stakeholders have an interest in bringing new employment to Birds Creek to create more job opportunities. They would also like to see new industries that attract a younger population to live and work in the area. Stakeholders also have an interest in expanding the Birds Creek recreation areas and holding more special events in the area.

While not specifically mentioned in the visions above, participants did acknowledge the importance of good housing and healthy living during their discussions.

A consolidated vision statement has been developed by the consulting team, taking into consideration the two group vision statements and other matters related to the hamlet's sustainable long-term development:

"Over 20 years Birds Creek will grow as a healthy hamlet, enhance its own identity and character, maintain appropriate residential areas, carefully develop the south-west corner of the hamlet with new industries and service sectors off 'Y' Road complementing the residential areas, and become a hub for recreation, culture and special events for local residents and tourists."

The above vision will be incorporated in the Secondary Plan.

The final exercise that was conducted during the session was “Councillor for a Day” where stakeholders were engaged to share their strategic objectives for their community by stating what they would do if they could be “Councillor for a Day”. The following actions were identified by participants:

- ✓ Continue to promote Birds Creek School
- ✓ Write an article in a journal, newspaper or magazine to promote Birds Creek
- ✓ Bring back the Fall Fair event
- ✓ Encourage the development of an environmentally friendly recreation complex.
- ✓ Build a replica train station
- ✓ Bring in new industries

These actions were chosen because participants believe that they would (i.e., underlying intent):

1. Attract younger residents and new families to Birds Creek;
2. Promote Birds Creek as a great place to live;
3. Highlight the heritage/history that Birds Creek has to offer; and,
4. Bring in new opportunities of employment.

The underlying intent represents strategic directions for the community and will be incorporated in the secondary plan.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

Key information has been gathered, reviewed, and analyzed to build a strong knowledge-base for the preparation of the Birds Creek Secondary Plan.

The work completed to-date has helped identify challenges, bring together stakeholder perspectives on a common vision for the future, and provides the initial basis for the development of the secondary plan.

Moving forward, the consulting team will be conducting a “Community Design Walk” to engage interested stakeholders on urban design and community character elements of the Hamlet.

Subsequent work will also include discussion about the long-term water/wastewater servicing of growth, additional analysis to determine land use designations and development phasing, and land use concept(s). This will then lead to the first draft of the secondary plan’s text and map(s), additional public consultation, and presentation of the final draft of the secondary plan.

## Appendices



# MEMO

**TO:** Rory Baksh

**FROM:** Alex Zeller

**DATE:** June 28, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Natural Environment Existing Conditions Report for the Birds Creek Secondary Plan

**OUR FILE:** 11-4752

---

## Introduction

The Natural Environment Existing Conditions Report provides an overall review of terrestrial natural environment within the Hamlet of Birds Creek. This includes:

- Collection and summary of background terrestrial natural environment information;
- Field investigations to assess/evaluate existing environmental conditions within priority areas of Birds Creek; and
- Determination of the significance of terrestrial natural features documented in the Study Area.

## Background Terrestrial Natural Environment Information

The background information review involved the collection and summary of secondary source terrestrial natural environment data and reports. Secondary source information was collected from the MNR's Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) and digital base map information was collected from Land Information Ontario (LIO).

### Species at Risk and Rare Species

A primary source of rare species information for Ontario is the MNR's NHIC Database. A review of the MNR's Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) database records indicate that there is the potential for a six Species at Risk (SAR) potentially found within the Hamlet of Birds Creek. The following table highlights the potential SAR in the study area, either by historic record sightings or by appropriate habitat found on site.

**Table 1:** Potential Species at Risk in Study Area

Common Name	Latin Name	Order	Ontario Status	S-Rank (Ontario)
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Turtle	Threatened	S3
Milksnake	<i>Lampropeltis triangular</i>	Snake	Special Concern	S3
Horned Clubtail	<i>Arigomphus cornutus</i>	Dragonfly	Threatened	S3
Auricled Twayblade	<i>Listera auriculata</i>	Aquatic Plant	-	S3
Ogden's Pondweed	<i>Potamogeton ogdenii</i>	Aquatic Plant	Endangered	SH
A Lichen	<i>Rhizocarpon oederi</i>	Lichen	-	S2S3

### Provincially Significant Designated Natural Features

There are no Provincially Significant Natural Features within Birds Creek or in the immediate vicinity.

### Water

The Hamlet of Birds Creek is within the York River watershed with a general flow of water to the South. Within the Hamlet most of the water flows into Birds Creek itself and into the York River immediately west of the Hamlet boundary. There are also a number of small depressions within the area that accumulate surficial and groundwater forming small ponds. In addition there are also a number of open roadside ditches that control stormwater runoff along Highway 62 and local roadways.

### **Field Investigation**

#### Field Inventory Methodology

Field assessments of terrestrial natural resources were conducted on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 and included the following:

- A botanical survey;
- Vegetation community classification of natural features using Ecological Land Classification for Southern Ontario (Lee *et al.* 1998);
- Documentation of incidental wildlife encountered in the field;
- Documentation of Species at Risk (SAR) encountered in the field; and
- Photo documentation.

### Soils

The soils on the site are glacial in origin. Their form is a product of glacial processes that occurred between 35,000 and 10,000 years ago. The effective texture of the four different soils identified during the field survey include Medium and Coarse Sand, Silty Loam, Loam, and Organics, with sand being the most prevalent. These field results corresponds well to the three soil types identified in the study area by the Soil Survey of Hastings County (1962) namely, Loamy Sand, Sandy Loam, and Organics.

### Ecological Land Classification (ELC)

Field data collection was undertaken in order to identify ecological communities within the likely future development areas of Birds Creek. Vegetation communities were evaluated using the MNR's ELC for Southern Ontario (Lee *et al.* 1998). Eight discrete natural ecological communities were documented within the study area in the likely future development areas. These ecological communities include:

1. Naturalized Coniferous Plantation
2. Tamarack-Black Spruce Organic Coniferous Swamp
3. Graminoid Open Fen
4. Open Aquatic
5. Red Pine Coniferous Plantation
6. Dry-Fresh White Pine – Hardwood Mixed Forest
7. Cultural Meadow
8. Dry-Fresh Poplar Mixed Forest

The **Naturalized Coniferous Plantation** can be found throughout the hamlet of Birds Creek. This community is a legacy of the intensive forestry operations that occurred throughout this area in previous years. Mature White and Red Pines dominate the overstory interspersed with Trembling Aspen. Other

common species within this community include; Braken Fern, Canada Mayflower, Velvet Leaved Blueberry, Bladder Sedge, Bunchberry, Bush Honeysuckle, and Starflower.

The **Tamarack-Black Spruce Organic Coniferous Swamp** that was assessed is located within the above-noted Naturalized Coniferous Plantation surrounding a small pond just north of 'Y' Road. The overstory of this community is dominated with Black Spruce and Tamarack. The understory consists predominantly of Labrador Tea, Velvet Leaf Blueberry, Leather Leaf, Cotton Grass, and other sedges. The forest floor consists predominantly of Sphagnum Moss and other organics. This indicates a relatively stable watertable for much of the year.

Within the Tamarack-Black Spruce Organic Coniferous Swamp is a **Graminoid Open Fen** and which surrounds an **Open Aquatic** community. The Graminoid Open Fen occurs in the transition between the Organic Coniferous Swamp and the Pond in the middle. Dominant species within this community include: Labrador Tea, Cotton Grass, Pitcher Plan, Buckbean, and sedges. This fen community is largely growing on a floating mat of Sphagnum moss which transitions suddenly into the Open Aquatic pond community. A number of small fish and tadpoles were observed within the Open Aquatic pond but aquatic species were not investigated further.

The **Red Pine Coniferous Plantation** community occurs within the western portion of the Hamlet. The community consists predominantly of mature Red Pine within a managed plantation. The plantation appears to have been recently thinned to encourage ideal tree growth. The understory consists of: Wild Red Raspberry, Chokecherry, Hawkweed, Bracken Fern, Serviceberry, sedges, and Mosses.

The **Dry-Fresh White Pine – Hardwood Mixed Forest** occurs in smaller patches throughout the area, particularly in the northwestern portion of the hamlet east of High Falls Road. This community is dominated by mature White Pines intermixed with younger successional hardwood species like Black Cherry, Red Maple, and Red Oak. Understory species include Bunchberry, Canada Mayflower, White Trillium, Wild Sarsaparilla, Speckled Alder, Blue Bead Lilly, and Bracken Fern to name a few.

A large **Cultural Meadow** is located west of Highway 62 and north of 'Y' Road. This meadow appears to have been created through the clearing of forested land and subsequent clearing of woody shrubs and trees that regenerate. The vegetation within the meadow is very limited to a few species of common grasses and herbs.

The forest within the northeastern portion of the hamlet is best described as a **Dry-Fresh Poplar Mixed Forest**. The overstory trees that make up this community include a diverse mix of coniferous and deciduous trees. Common tree species include: White Pine, Black Cherry, Trembling Aspen, White Birch, and Red Maple. Diversity of the understory also echoes that of the overstory. Common species include Red Osier Dogwood, Poison Ivy, Wild Sarsaparilla, Foam Flower, Bracken Fern, White Trillium, Common Anemone, and Large Flowered Bellflower, among others.

### Wildlife

Incidental wildlife observations were made during the field survey conducted for this assignment. These observations include;

- Wild Turkey
- Red Squirrel
- Snowshoe Hare
- White Tailed Deer
- Chipmunk
- Red-Tailed Hawk
- Gold Finch
- Common Sparrow
- American Crow
- Blue Jay

## Conclusions

- A stormwater management study is required from developers when development is proposed.
- Much of the forested area of Birds Creek is a Red Pine Coniferous Plantation, Naturalized Coniferous Plantation, or a Cultural Meadow. While these communities provide some limited habitat for wildlife, their floristic diversity and ecological significance is limited.
- The “County Forest” contains a number of forestry related roadways that are regularly used as informal trails (both active and motorized). These trails informally link to the existing road and trail network in surrounding lands.
- The “County Forest” is a plantation with some naturalized areas, rather than a naturally occurring woodlot.
- A small aquatic and wetland community is located north of ‘Y’ Road in the southwestern portion of the Hamlet within the “County Forest.” This community contains flora and fauna that can be susceptible to impact of adjacent development pressures.
  - A detailed Environmental Impact Statement is required before any development occurs adjacent to this area.
  - The extent of this area zoned for environmental protection is appropriate.
- The corridor in which Birds Creek flows is perhaps the most ecologically significant feature of the municipality likely contributing significantly to the ecological diversity within the area. This area supports a variety of wetland and lowland ecosystems; it provides an ecological corridor through the hamlet and significantly contributes to the overall ecological integrity of the area. It is zoned for environmental protection and it is anticipated that no new development will occur within this area.
- Six provincial Species at Risk have been recorded in the Natural Heritage Information Centre within the immediate area of Birds Creek. All development will require an Environmental Impact Statement to address Species at Risk.
- There are no Provincially Significant Natural Features within Birds Creek.

# Memo

**To:** Rory Baksh, Stephanie Simard; Dillon Consulting  
**From:** Kelly O'Brien; EDP Consulting  
**Date:** 7/21/2011  
**Re:** Birds Creek Project - High Level Commercial Review

---

EDP Consulting was retained to undertake a brief high-level review of the potential for new commercial development in the Birds Creek study area based on secondary source material and knowledge of commercial development locational needs. Primary research or site visits to the Birds Creek study area were not part of this assignment.

Background documents that were reviewed included:

- Hastings County Economic Situation Analysis, 2008
- An Economic Development Action Plan for Hastings County, 2009-2012
- Hastings County Business Retention & Expansion Project Final Report, Feb 2, 2009
- Demographic Study and Vacant Land Analysis, North Hastings Market Area, Draft
- Downtown Bancroft Trade Area Report
- Build Bancroft Integrated Business Plan, April 2010
- Draft Memorandum on Commercial Lot Inquiry, Birds Creek Hamlet, April 6, 2011
- Planning and Development Study, Birds Creek Area, Jan. 2006
- Birds Creek Land Use Map, June 2011

Key findings from the review are noted below.

## Highway 62 Commercial Area

The Highway 62 portion of Birds Creek appears to have attracted small as well as space extensive uses (such as gravel and sand operations) that require low cost locations and are unserved. It is likely that the area will continue to attract similar types of uses as long as it remains unserved. It is noted that the depth of lots in this area is limited by topography. Development pressures and commercial sprawl from Bancroft along Highway 62 may result in a demand for uses of a similar scale and type as those that have located along the northern portion of Highway 62 in Bancroft. A review of the type of commercial uses that have located in that area should be undertaken to provide insight into the types of commercial uses which may locate in infill or vacant sites along Highway 62 in Birds Creek. However, if the area remains unserved, it may not be able to support higher density commercial development. Opportunities could be considered for extension of services along Highway 62 from Bancroft, as this could result in some increased investment and redevelopment of properties along Highway 62 in Birds Creek. The residential properties in this area should be redeveloped to commercial uses over time.

Consideration could be given to initiating a community improvement plan and landscaping improvements to the Highway 62 section of Birds Creek, creating a greater distinction from

Bancroft and enhancing the image as a commercial area. The importance of community improvement in business, commercial and downtown areas was noted in the *Hastings County Business Retention and Expansion Project* report as being very important to business community morale and business attraction potential. Consideration could also be given to requesting the MTO to reduce the speed limit along this section to 50 kilometers per hour, which may help capture expenditures or interest from drive-through traffic.

#### Low population growth limits the demand for major retail uses

Birds Creek is located in the North Hastings Market Area (NHMA), an area described in the *Growth Accommodations Report - North Hastings Market Area* as characterized by rugged topography, small settlement areas, and a sparse rural population. The 2006 population level of the NHMA was reported as 12,175, with 4,033 persons living in Hastings Highlands and 3,838 living in Bancroft. The community of Bancroft functions as the commercial centre for the NHMA, and has a significant level of in-commuting for jobs.

The Bancroft area is estimated to have a primary trade area population of between 12,564 and 16,800 based on data included in the *Downtown Bancroft Trade Area Report* and *Build Bancroft Integrated Business Plan*. As noted in the *Growth Accommodations Report - North Hastings Market Area*, it is expected that there will only be limited growth in the NHMA in the planning period (up to 2031). Therefore, it is unlikely that there will be the market demand for new large retail facilities. However, there may be opportunities to fill gaps in services provided, and to target niche markets such as tourists. No comprehensive retail market study is available for Birds Creek or the NHMA, and therefore it is not known whether the commercial supply meets the existing demand. Available studies have considered the size of the primary and secondary trade areas and tourist visitation, but a review has not been undertaken of the supply of commercial development in the NHMA, gaps or opportunities. This is a limitation in planning for new commercial development. As noted in the *2009-2012 Economic Development Action Plan for Hastings County*: “ a solid investment marketing plan should be tailored around market threshold analysis (what the gaps are) and let local businesses know what is missing, and also market the opportunities to potential new investors”.

#### There appears to be sufficient land designated for future employment uses

In the North Hastings Market Area report, it was noted that there appears to be sufficient vacant land in the market area to accommodate growth over the planning period. Specifically it is stated that: “..the rural areas and small settlement areas within the NHMA have experienced only limited growth in population since 1991. Given that the majority of residential and employment-based growth within the NHMA is anticipated to occur within the Bancroft Urban Area, there appears to be an adequate supply of vacant land in each of the hamlets to accommodate projected growth to 2036. Growth in the hamlets should be directed to infilling situations.”

#### Demand will likely be from small owner-operated businesses

Small businesses account for the majority of businesses in Birds Creek as well as elsewhere in Hastings County and small businesses (such as retail) and tourism (such as accommodations, attractions, and restaurants) have been identified as being a core proactive sector for attraction, retention and expansion efforts in the county.

### Tourism is an important market for Birds Creek

Based on the Build Bancroft Project reports, it is estimated that around 150,000 people visit the Bancroft area per year, which includes Birds Creek. Highway 62 is the main route through Birds Creek, leading to Algonquin Park. Improvements to the commercial areas along Highway 62 and the Heritage Trail could help make the area more attractive to tourists passing through Birds Creek and those using the trail, which could potentially result in more spending in the local area. The importance of the tourist market was noted in the *Hastings County Business Retention and Expansion Project* report, where recruitment of small owner-operated businesses that are not dependent on a large population base and are visitor-oriented was recommended.

### Highway 62/Y Road Area

The majority of economic growth in small communities comes from expansion of existing businesses and entrepreneurship. It appears that there are limited opportunities for expansion at existing sites. Inadequate space for expansion at existing sites was reported as the biggest reason that companies were not completely satisfied with their current location in Hastings County (noted in the *Hastings County Business Retention and Expansion Project* report).

The 100 acre parcel of land lying to the west of Highway 62 and fronting onto Highway 62 and Y Road is a good location for new commercial development, and these lands should be developed before opening up new lands for commercial development. These lands have excellent access, and are situated in proximity to the existing commercial area along Highway 62, and industrial areas. A development proposal is in process for a 1-2 acre site in this area for an office building for Greenview Environmental Management. It appears that no space was available for expansion at this company's current site. These lands, particularly if serviced, could be a prime area for commercial development in Birds Creek (lack of servicing was considered to be an impediment to growth by about 25% of businesses surveyed as part of the *Hastings County Business Retention and Expansion Project*). However, it will be important that these lands are adequately planned, phased in, rather than developed on an ad hoc basis. Landscaping guidelines should also be implemented.

### Other Lands for Commercial Uses

There are a number of factors that developers and businesses consider in new investment and site selection decisions and these vary by type and level of investment. In terms of large retail commercial or tourist related developments such as accommodation facilities, the key factors relate to:

- Market demand/trade area and growth potential;
- Transportation access/visibility;
- Competition;
- Development costs;
- Servicing cost and availability;
- Operating costs, including labour, energy, and taxes;
- Synergies with other uses;
- Business expansion strategies;

- Risk and likely return on investment.

The block of 175 acres of land that the Municipality purchased on the west side of the hamlet that was formerly County forest may be particularly attractive for commercial development given that the Town of Bancroft has decided not to proceed with the Build Bancroft Project. That project was envisioned as an extensive re-development of the downtown core of the Bancroft, under a private/public partnership model. The redevelopment was being considered for a 30 acre parcel, with around 178,000 square feet of development, including 21,700 sq. ft. of new retail commercial space, and a 33,000 sq. ft. model/hotel, medical building, and other uses. Given that the Build Bancroft project will not be proceeding, there could be a potential interest by developers and investors in the former County forest lands for commercial components of that project.

It is recommended that the block of 175 acres of land that the Municipality purchased on the west side of the hamlet that was formerly County forest be protected under a holding zone for future commercial uses and that further consideration be given to these lands as part of future secondary plan reviews or in response to development proposals from investors for large scale commercial or tourism development (similar to what was envisioned as part of the Build Bancroft Project). Consideration should be given to protecting these lands for higher order tourist and commercial development. It is also recommended that these lands not be opened up for development of small commercial uses until other designated commercial areas such as the Highway 62/Y Road Area have been developed and other potential locations for such uses in Birds Creek have been considered.