



BUILDING A CREATIVE ECONOMY

A Cultural Plan for Lambton County

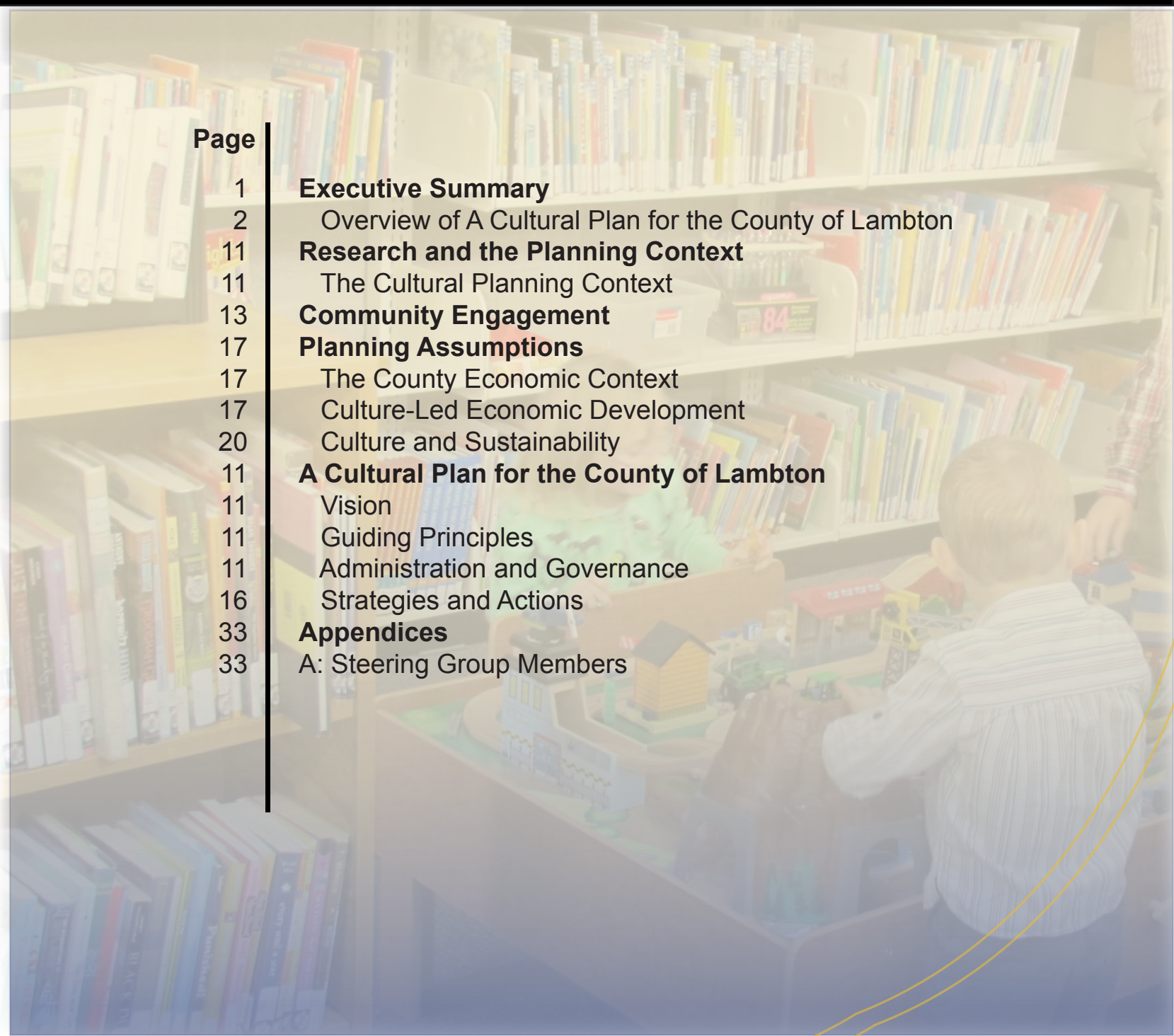
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1. Introduction:



Photos provided by Avolution

This Cultural Plan represents a significant step forward for the County of Lambton. The commitment of Lambton County Council to undertake such a project sends an important message to all residents that Lambton County is committed to advancing well-grounded economic, cultural, social and environmental plans.

This plan should be considered a catalyst, a framework for community change and a call to action. The responsibility for implementation and improvements does not rest solely with the Council, however: the community and its various components (cultural industries, business, heritage supporters, artists and artisans, environmentalists, neighbourhood leaders, the First Nations, educators, tourism, all orders of government and the broad public) are significant parts of any Cultural Plan and its implementation.

From larger centres such as Sarnia to smaller communities such as Dawn-Euphemia and all across Lambton County, there is growing recognition that the world is changing, the face of Canada is changing, and municipalities are fast becoming the most important order of government.

Progressive municipalities find themselves trying to grow and prosper in a highly competitive environment, and that requires innovative thinking and changes in the traditional way of doing business for towns and cities.

In undertaking a municipal cultural plan, the County of Lambton joins leading municipalities across Canada in recognizing the increasingly important role played by culture in growing local economies and enhancing the quality of life for its residents. There is widespread evidence that these economic benefits apply to communities large and small, in both urban and rural

settings. Municipal cultural planning is recognized as an important tool for advancing these economic and broader community agendas.

Lambton County is no different from other counties that have a significant proportion of rural and smaller communities. The agricultural industry is changing, it is difficult to attract and retain bright young minds, family farms are under stress, and traditional economic foundations are being replaced by newer, often greener industries and technologies.

It takes considerable courage for a municipality to examine itself critically and to consider future opportunities. Lambton County Council should be commended for its actions. We acknowledge the leadership of Councillor Bev MacDougall and the members of the Cultural Planning steering group, Ron Van Horne, Robert Tremain and staff of the Cultural Services Division for their support, participation and ideas throughout this process.



Photos by Hailey McHarg

Canada's cities will be models of environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability. They will build on their distinctive human, cultural, historical and natural characteristics.

Prime Minister's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities

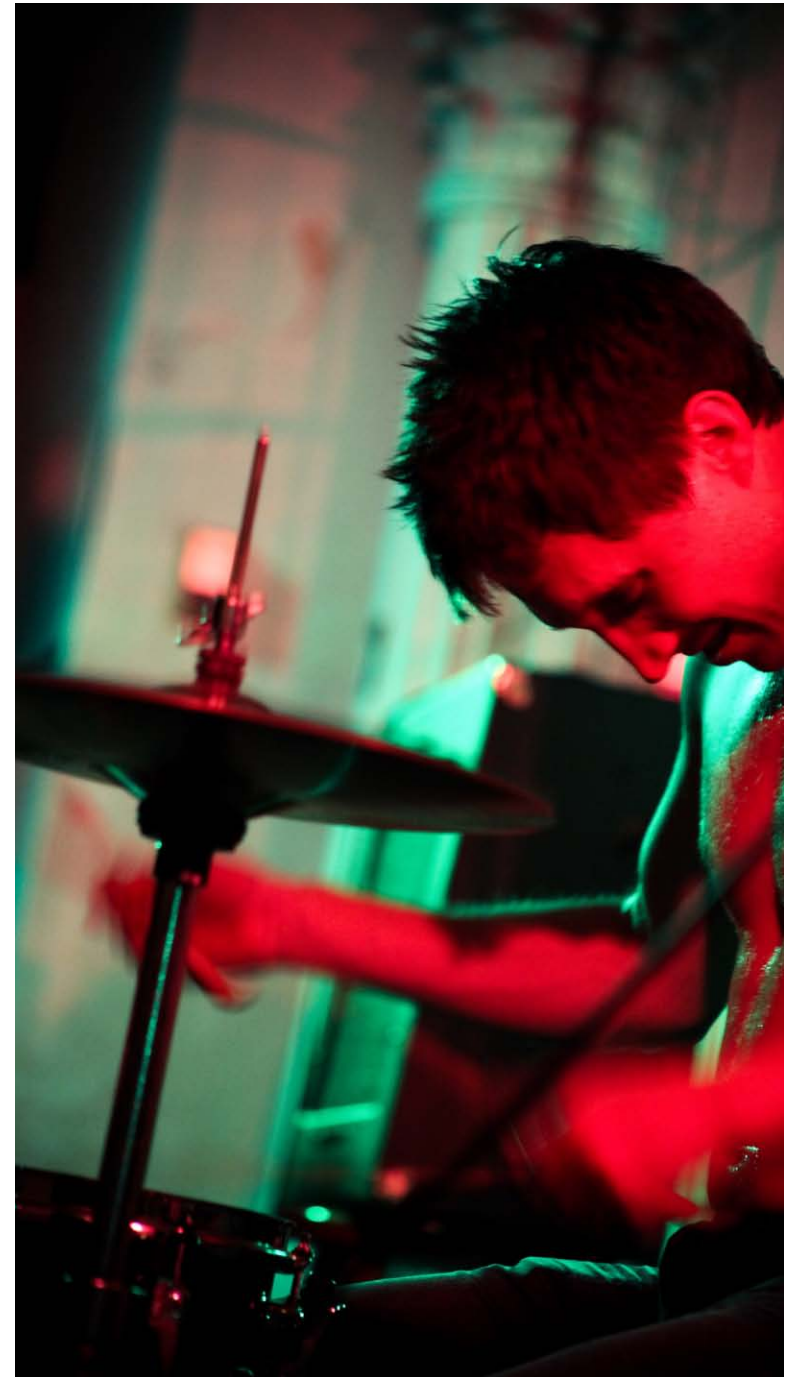
In particular, we acknowledge the strong and active participation of so many citizens who came out to the public meetings, offered comments and suggestions, and actively participated in developing this strategy. Any good Cultural Plan must be driven from the community-up, and the Lambton County plan enjoys a particularly solid foundation of community participation and direction.

This plan should be considered a 'living document'. In other words, this is the start, not the finish, of the cultural planning process for Lambton County. We are confident that the community will embrace the direction and thoughts of this plan, and will then claim ownership to extend, develop and enhance the many recommendations contained in this report.

There is also an opportunity for the County to work more closely with the First Nations communities, to promote and support their proud history, culture and social aspects. This heritage offers a unique platform upon which to celebrate joint events, activities and opportunities.

This is an exciting time for municipal government, and adding Culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability is both timely and important for Lambton County.

Economic development, tourism, local food opportunities, the growth of Lambton College and its valuable spin-offs, downtown renewal in many communities across the County, and enhancing support for arts, culture and heritage are important next steps for County Council. The Lambton County Cultural Plan supports these vital steps, and creates a blueprint for action and progress.



2. Lambton County's Cultural Plan process:

Purpose of the Plan:

The underlying goal of the Cultural Plan for the County of Lambton is to establish an overall vision, and to identify strategies and actions that can guide cultural development in the County over the next 5-10 years. The Cultural Plan will reposition culture as a core planning and economic development responsibility across County Divisions. The project was undertaken with the financial support of the County and the Creative Communities Prosperity Fund of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

Guiding Principles:

1. *Accessibility* – We will strive to provide access to cultural opportunities across all parts of the County and relevant through all phases of life.
2. *Diversity and inclusion* – We understand the diversity of our community includes age, ethno-cultural background, income, language and education; all are valuable sources of ideas, perspectives and talents that enrich our community.
3. *Partnerships and collaboration* – The County will build partnerships and work collaboratively with the private, public and volunteer sectors to identify and seize shared challenges and opportunities.
4. *Accountability and fiscal responsibility* – We will ensure the most efficient and effective use of County resources, and strive for continuous innovation in addressing the needs of the community.

The Planning Process:

Start-Up

The process was formally launched at a public meeting held in the Council chambers on November 29, 2010 and attended by more than 40 members of Council, municipal staff and community representatives. A Steering Group comprised of municipal, business, community and culture sector representatives was struck to guide and support the planning process. The Steering Group was chaired by Councillor Bev McDougall. A full list of members is set out in Appendix A.

Communications

A first step was to develop a project brand (Building a Creative Economy: A Cultural Plan for the County of Lambton) and create a website to support the project and

help raise awareness of the importance of culture to the future of the County. This website kept local residents informed about the plan and its progress, as well as encouraging direct feedback.

Research and the Planning Context

The next step involved a review of a range of existing municipal plans and strategies to understand the planning context for the Cultural Plan. A defining feature of municipal cultural planning is how to better integrate culture into planning and decision-making across municipal departments; an understanding of the existing planning context was therefore critical. An interdepartmental City-County staff meeting later in the process discussed further opportunities for integrated planning.

Community Engagement

A community engagement process followed, involving the following elements:

- a) Combined meeting of key stakeholders, staff and County Council, November 2010: orientation of the process to come, and overview of the contributions made by culture to economic development.
- b) In-depth confidential interviews with 15 municipal, business and community leaders as listed in Appendix B;
- c) Continued consultations and engagement with the Steering Group and an inter-departmental group of municipal staff;
- d) Three community forums, in Sarnia, Forest and Petrolia;
- e) The opportunity for public participation through the web-based internet forum.

Draft Final Report

A draft Cultural Plan was then reviewed by the Steering Group prior to being brought forward to County Council. Input and comments were then adapted into this final report to the community and to Council.

3. Vision:



Photos by Hailey McHarg

There are many elements that make up this Vision statement, including:

Culture is essential to making Lambton a place where people want to live, work, play and invest.

Culture should be considered in all aspects of civic planning and decision-making.

Culture is a powerful tool for celebrating diversity and fostering inclusion.

Culture is the foundation of our identity as individual communities and the shared history and identity of Lambton County as a whole.

Cultural resources and activities are essential to creating vibrant downtowns that serve as social, cultural and economic hubs in all our communities.

We value cultural groups collaborating and working together toward shared purposes.

Artists, artisans and other creators contribute new ideas, products, innovation and technologies that are important to our community's future.

A creative community is a healthy community that supports the protection of our environment and natural heritage resources.

The County of Lambton believes creativity, culture and quality of place are fundamental to building a sustainable, prosperous and diversified economy and providing a superior quality of life for our residents.



Lambton County is stronger when we come together to celebrate our heritage, our artists and artisans, our creators and producers, and our communities.

4. Strategic Directions and Actions Summary:



Photo by Hailey McHarg

This report offers a wide variety of community opinions and ideas. The Steering Group has considered them as part of the final report, and acknowledges the strong participation from across the County. A number of important new initiatives are being recommended in this report, and actions have been proposed for each of nine Strategic Directions:

1. Integrated Planning for Culture
2. Marketing and Promoting Cultural Resources
3. Growing the Creative Cultural Economy
4. Expanding Cultural Tourism
5. Culture and Local Food
6. Enriching County Identity
7. Coordination and Collaboration in the Cultural Sector
8. Cultural Spaces and Facilities
9. Natural and Cultural Heritage

5. Immediate Recommendations to County



Photo by Glenn Ogilvie

This report makes the following immediate recommendations to Council to launch implementation of the Cultural Plan:

1. *Adopt the Cultural Plan* – Adoption of the Plan confirms that the County recognizes culture as a planning and policy priority.
2. *Direct staff to develop an Implementation Plan* – To maintain momentum, staff should be directed to produce a detailed multi-year Implementation Plan, complete with budget implications.
3. *Communicate the Cultural Plan* – implement a communications strategy that shares the vision and strategies set out in the Cultural Plan with the community.

6. The importance of culture for economic prosperity:



Photo by Glenn Ogilvie

It is important to understand the scope and economic impact of creative industries in and for Lambton County.

For example, the economic benefits from Lambton College are substantial and the importance of the college to the health of the community must be clearly understood. The Research Park also offers significant economic potential for Sarnia and Lambton County.

What many people refer to as the CRINK Economy (Creative, Innovative, Knowledge-based) provides a wide range of jobs and is already a significant part of the economic activity throughout Lambton County. This contribution to the regional economy by the CRINK sector has been underestimated in the past.

Jobs in this sector are growing. Research has confirmed that such jobs are often higher paid than other sectors, more secure during economic downturns, and are certainly going to be considered the jobs of tomorrow.

Lambton County's economic opportunities, as identified by SLEP, include areas such as

- green energy
- technology
- agriculture
- small/medium enterprises
- biofuels
- alternative energy

These are all CRINK economy jobs. When these opportunities are added to other emerging economic spires, a distinctive new economic direction emerges for the County:

- tourism
- local foods
- senior entrepreneurs
- more diverse population bringing new ideas and economic opportunities

When these categories are then added to the jobs and resources identified in the following chart, it is obvious that linking the creative sector with the local economic development opportunities and with the tourism potential will provide powerful new economic opportunities for the County:



7. The Cultural Planning Context

“We must put culture and place at the centre of building Canadian communities”

External Advisory Committee
on Cities
And Communities (Harcourt)
Commission

This Cultural Plan for the County of Lambton establishes an overall vision, strategies and actions to guide cultural development in the County over the next 5-10 years. The Plan seeks to integrate culture as a core planning and economic development responsibility across County departments and municipalities.

Other intended outcomes are:

1. To build a shared vocabulary and understanding of cultural planning with Council and staff across departments;
2. To strengthen collaboration between the County, local municipalities, business and community partners in support of cultural development;
3. To foster stronger networks and coordination across the full range of arts, heritage and cultural groups and interests;
4. To raise awareness of the importance of culture in the wider community, as a source of sustainable economic development and community pride.



Photo by Glenn Ogilvie



Past Achievements and Leadership:

It is important to acknowledge that the Cultural Plan builds on a history of cultural leadership in Lambton County.

Among the area's achievements and distinctions:

- The County is one of few municipalities in Ontario to operate an integrated Cultural Services Division. The Lambton system connects facilities, resources and programs at libraries, museums, archives and art galleries, working in a network that effectively covers every corner of the County, serviced by a regular shuttle van. This structure itself guarantees continuous interface, collaboration and co-delivery among departments. The Lambton system presents a model organizational structure that should be considered for adoption elsewhere in Ontario.
- **Sarnia-Lambton Library Act:** A special exemption from the Ontario Library Act, the Province passed this in recognition of the innovative two-tier partnership that governs libraries and the delivery of programs here. Lambton County Libraries is one of four such two-tier systems in Ontario, all of which work more effectively than their impoverished and under-supported cousins because they are funded and governed as line departments.
- In the mid-1980's the Lambton Heritage Museum and the Moore Museum helped establish Heritage Sarnia-Lambton, a network of museums and heritage interests committed to the pursuit of shared objectives through the pooling of scarce resources. Museum partnership models such as this are now becoming more common



in Ontario, modeled in part on the early success of the Lambton experience.

- ***Integrated Cultural Services Delivery Strategies Project:*** In 2007, AuthentiCity worked with the Cultural Services Division on this project. One of four core recommendations from that study was that the County of Lambton develop a municipal cultural plan.
- ***Museum Services*** –Lambton County Museums have long been acknowledged as provincial leaders for their special events, cultural heritage group partnerships, and aggressive active-collecting programs. Also, the Oil Museum of Canada and Lambton County Planning Department facilitated the designation of the Oil Springs Heritage Conservation District, the first industrial heritage conservation district in Ontario, and the importance of an upper-tier municipality being delegated responsibility for the Ontario Heritage Act. That work continues to target designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with huge implications for tourism in central Lambton.
- ***Gallery Lambton*** – The County's commitment to establish a state-of-the-art facility in the downtown Sarnia heritage streetscape and cultural arts district is a major milestone. Identifying strategies to leverage this investment and advance community-wide cultural goals and opportunities is a priority of the current cultural plan.

Heritage and cultural networks have come together to tackle an impressive range of project-specific initiatives in Lambton County. Similar to the above examples, the single most common success factor found in these initiatives is that they each represent a wide array of cultural organizations, (occasionally with up to 30 working and funding partners), pooling limited resources to reach common goals on behalf of community.

1. *The successful \$25,000 Hudson Foundation Grant in 2005/06* - a partnership of Lambton County Library, Lambton Heritage Museum, Lambton Room Archives, Warwick Township Heritage Book Committee volunteers, Watford Historical Society, Lambton Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, and the Hudson Foundation of Texas. The project focused on collection and preservation of photographs, art, drawings and literary work by area residents and the provision of online access to digitized heritage materials for all residents. Phase 1 of the project finished in September 2006 with all objectives met, and Phase 2 was begun in 2010. The project presents a best practices reminder for all Ontario arts and culture organizations not to overlook the possibility of obtaining funds from American foundations.
2. *The \$75,000 Ontario Trillium Teen Endeavours Grant in 2005* - the Library partnered with the Organization for Literacy in Lambton, Rebound, local school boards and local municipalities to mount the Lambton Initiative for Teen Endeavors, a program to enhance teen programs and services delivered through the library system. Today, every Branch of Lambton County Library has a dedicated teen space and a website. Another project legacy is that Teen Advisory Groups (TAGs) remain active in all Lambton communities.
3. *The 2006 Ontario Visual Heritage DVD project "Sarnia Lambton: Just Passing Through"* – Lambton Museums worked with Heritage Sarnia-Lambton, Stones N Bones Museum, and another 26 municipalities, not-for-profit organizations and businesses to produce this high-definition DVD. Made possible by a \$75,000 grant from the Trillium Foundation, the DVD brings to life stories from Sarnia-Lambton's exciting past in a feature length, broadcast-quality documentary, accompanied by a teacher's curriculum guide that was distributed to every school in Lambton County. TV-Cogeco Sarnia

has broadcast the film in its entirety on four occasions, typically every Canada Day. The DVD won the Ontario Museum Association's Award of Excellence in 2006.

The project marked the first time that a comprehensive inventory of the cultural traditions and stories of Lambton's history had been undertaken, ranked by significance and then grouped by central themes of identity in the community.

4. *The Organization for Literacy in Lambton (OLL)* - Lambton County Library partnered with Organization for Literacy to qualify for the Alpha Plus adult literacy deposit collection. The library took responsibility for cataloging and housing the collection and making it available to the public. OLL encourages students to use this collection and the Library's facilities and services.
5. *The Aamjiwnaang First Nations* - Lambton County Library worked in partnership to record cultural and historical materials related to native heritage, in both English and Ojibway. Made possible by a joint application to Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Aamjiwnaang Library now curates this extensive collection to build historical and cultural pride in the native community.
6. *The Lambton Kent District School Board* - Lambton County Library shares and operates public library space in two rural public schools, in a close partnership not common across Ontario. School Board-owned books in these two locations are catalogued, processed and maintained in the library database by the Library Technical Services department on a cost recovery basis. Finally, the Library provides instructional class visits, orientations and other special programmes to the Kent-Lambton School Board and the St. Clair District Catholic School Board.

8. Community Engagement and Responses:



Photos by Hailey McHarg

Following the research phase, the consultants undertook a series of public consultations and community engagement, including:

- in-depth interviews with 15 key stakeholders
- a review of preliminary themes and strategic directions with the Steering Group
- an inter-departmental meeting of City and County administrative staff
- facilitated open community forums in Sarnia, Forest and Petrolia

The interest taken by the community in the planning and engagement process was strong, providing solid direction and feedback to the consultants on the formulation of the Cultural Plan draft. A summary of themes emerging from all channels of community engagement offers insight and direction:

a) *Sarnia-Lambton Community Summit (2010)*

Although not part of the engagement activities undertaken during the course of developing the Cultural Plan, this community-wide summit highlighted numerous issues of culture and local heritage and so is included here. Among community achievements identified in the summit, a significant number related to culture and heritage:

- The development of Gallery Lambton and the revitalization of downtown Sarnia were identified as linked key accomplishments
- First Fridays and Sarnia Art Walk were cited as examples of growth in cultural awareness and joint opportunities
- The development of a Natural Heritage Strategy as part of the Lambton Official Plan is seen as a significant accomplishment and planning tool to ensure natural sustainability
- Waterfront trails for both recreational and tourism development
- Significant tourism and heritage development initiatives were cited, including completion of an Oil Heritage Conservation District Management Plan, joint international marketing of Sarnia-Lambton and Port Huron as “The Blue Water Region”, and waterfront-based festivals such as Sarnia Bayfest

The Summit Report grouped and ranked community interests and future priorities, many of which complement the specific action strategies recommended in this Cultural Plan.



Photos by Hailey McHarg

b) Stakeholder Interviews

Confidential in-depth interviews were conducted with a wide range of community and civic leaders (Appendix B) each of whom is to be thanked for the candid and insightful comments. Their collective input is reflected throughout this report and the recommendations, and helped inform the core directions and recommendations of the Cultural Plan.

c) Community Forums

Over 90 people participated in a community input forum in Sarnia, Petrolia or Forest. Discussion at each was broad and directly related to the goals of municipal cultural planning. The comments and opinions were often strong, vocal and independent, and showed the passion that the people of Lambton County have for their community and for making it better. This valuable ‘grass roots’ input has been integrated into the draft plan. Key themes arising from the forums include:

i) Comments from the Sarnia Forum at Gallery Lambton

The Sarnia discussion provided valuable input to the vision and guiding principles of the Cultural Plan. Other strategic themes included the need for stronger marketing and promotion; use of social media; the need for regular dialogue and evaluation of results following implementation of the Plan; the need to ensure affordable, physical and electronic access to all cultural programs; and a proposed Youth Council that would help engage, empower and retain local youth.

ii) Comments from the Petrolia Forum at Victoria Hall

Petrolia discussions highlighted designation and preservation of heritage properties; the importance of

arts to community identity and pride; the rare opportunity presented by an extensive library, museums and gallery network; local food sources and celebrations; the potential for networked cultural facilities to maximize community interest, talent and specialization; the importance of culture for economic prosperity and quality of life; arts as an attractor of young people to come, stay and work; and the need to be cognizant of both the strengths and weaknesses in the cultural composition of the county.

iii) Comments from the Forest Forum at Lambton Shores Community Centre

Public input heard at Forest brought to attention the need to support arts and culture facilities now when many are at risk, and so avoid ‘sliding backwards’; the need to develop realistic approaches adapted to various parts of the county; a perceived lack of support from the County for local artists, artisans and the art economy; recognizing the potential of arts, culture and food as a tourism attraction; the numerous local food producers with the potential to complement restaurant menu specialization, farmer’s markets and farm-gate experience tours; opportunities for golf and amateur sports events. At Forest and at each of the other Forums, discussion praised the natural heritage of Lambton County as making a difference to people’s pride in their community, citing the Lake Huron waterfront, St. Clair Riverfront, Pinery Provincial Park, Rock Glen, The County Forest and the Ausable Valley as examples significant on a Provincial scale.

...the need to support arts and culture facilities now when many are at risk, and so avoid ‘sliding backwards’...

...Forest Forum

As one participant noted, “There is no collective vision for the county...they have never built a community; there is no cohesive message.”

Summary of Input from the Community Forums:

...There is the need to grow culture from the grassroots, and develop a strong new voice for culture. With focused effort, a reinvigorated commitment and some 'early successes', a positive change can be developed across the county...

In inviting the public to a process of genuine engagement, it was expected that the input could be blunt and uncomfortable. Participants were encouraged to “call it like it is”, and their candid remarks were recognized as the expression of individuals who care about and want to improve community. While some input congratulated Lambton County on instances where it leads the Province, such as ‘Circles out of Poverty’, other examples were raised where Lambton needs improvement to meet established best practices. It is hoped that this summary of comments and themes will be positively received, because the goal of building a better community is the driving force for this report and from the community.

a) Community Attitudes:

It takes a generation or more to change traditional views and assumptions. Attitudinal change is most likely to occur through social exchange and personal interaction. It is in this context that cultural, sports and food events have become recognized as powerful vehicles to initiate and support attitudinal change. For this reason, the Cultural Plan will encourage more intra-county activities that enhance sharing between and across Lambton’s local communities.

Ideas and interests for the allocation of personal leisure time vary in different parts of the County, a fact made evident at the three community forums. For example, the three areas articulated different degrees of support for arts, heritage, culture and tourism-oriented projects. It was noted that interest in cultural programs in these instances is sometimes limited to events occurring in the immediate local area. Greater awareness of cultural entertainment and event opportunities across the County is needed to counter this effect, and to nurture the emergence of a county-wide identity.

Like many rural communities, Sarnia-Lambton has traditionally focused more on the provision of sports facilities than the support of cultural programs. The community is beginning to recognize that both are needed to develop a contemporary community which offers a high quality of life. That provision of multiple community facilities, benefits and activities will also be appealing to new, diverse residents.

As a general observation, there has been a lack of understanding of culture in the county, which limits the ability to generate public and private-sector support. There is the need to grow culture from the grassroots, and develop a strong new voice for culture. With focused effort, a reinvigorated commitment and some ‘early successes’, a positive change can be developed across the county.

b) Underestimating the value of Culture – especially Economically:

The breadth, depth and significance of culture and cultural resources in the County have not been well understood. In particular, the economic importance of creativity and culture to future economic growth and prosperity is not appreciated and recognized.

Culture continues to be considered as the realm of not-for-profit arts and heritage organizations and their collective programs. While these efforts remain critically important parts of the total asset base, a fuller understanding of how to expand the creative cultural industries is needed.

Similarly, fresh opportunities presented by cultural tourism in the context of a renewed Tourism Sarnia-Lambton and the new Regional Tourism Organization (RTO)¹ require detailed analysis and support, leading to action.

Culture-led economic development strategies and opportunities must be better understood and leveraged to support economic



Photo by Glenn Ogilvie

Lambton County can boast many positive assets and exciting opportunities for the future. However, to achieve its full potential some re-thinking is required: a freshening of attitude and relationships, support for non-traditional opportunities, and the willingness to assume leadership and move beyond historic issues are some necessary steps. Focusing on the past will not achieve future greatness.

diversification and growth in the face of industrial change and the economic challenges facing the County.

The several waterfronts in Lambton County also represent a unique cultural-tourism-economic opportunity. Water can be magic for many people. Careful planning and usage of waterfronts, ranging from public trails and pathways to interesting public art installations, are an exciting opportunity for the county.

c) Urban/Rural Divide:

The County of Lambton is a federation of 11 municipalities, which defines the roles, responsibilities and relationships between the County and the local municipalities. Historically, one source of tension and challenge lies in the disproportionate size and population base of Sarnia relative to the rest of the County. This is to be expected, as similar challenges are faced in other County and regional municipal contexts.

Lambton County and Sarnia must continue to work together closely on key cultural and economic issues, such as increasing immigration; retaining and attracting more bright young minds; becoming more diverse as a society; being an attractive area for retirees; better supporting local producers (including farmers, the agriculture industry, local artists, creators and others); and being more aggressive and out-reaching in economic, business and tourism development.

d) Economic Challenges:

As with many parts of Ontario, Lambton County faces serious challenges stemming from economic restructuring, population decline, demographic change and aging population. Lambton County joins the many communities in Ontario and beyond whose future depends on attracting and retaining bright minds that will drive innovation, creative enterprise, entrepreneurship and the expansion of

small and medium size enterprises.

There is also a need to exploit opportunities as they emerge in the area of tourism development. The Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership and Tourism Sarnia-Lambton understand these challenges and the importance of creativity and culture to Lambton's economic future.

They have also expressed strong interest in participating in strategy identification, and contributing to actions emerging from the Cultural Plan.

As one community leader stated, "Lambton County needs to look at culture with a prosperity agenda mind-set..."

e) Image and Identity:

Several respondents identified the lack of a clear, coherent and positive image and identity for Lambton County. Some observers noted a long-standing (and unfair) perception of the County tied to the Chemical Valley and environmental degradation. It was found that there are different perceptions of the county held by residents in the southeast, for example, compared to those who live adjacent to water.

These issues present the County with a challenge: if residents don't know how to describe their county in a consistent and compelling way, how can they communicate a positive image to visitors – or potential new residents?

Clearly, a change needs to be made to the identity branding of Sarnia and Lambton County, one that moves away from the negative images of the Chemical Valley towards a cleaner, greener region featuring modern education, business, culture, agriculture, alternative and green energy, research and technology, biofuels, and which supports small to medium enterprise...and most importantly, a region that offers a wonderful quality of life to people of all ages.

...Lambton County has many strong, dedicated political leaders and administrative professionals who have expressed the willingness to move the City and the County forward in bold new directions...

f) Shared Vision:

As one participant noted, “There is no collective vision for the county...they have never built a community; there is no cohesive message.”

The issue of ‘who advocates for the County?’ arose several times, and it was found that both the title and function of the County Warden was relatively unknown to large segments of the population.

Also, there is a complex mix of planning, economic development and inspection service delivery between the County and City that works against the development of a compelling shared vision and identity.

g) Entrepreneurship and Innovation:

Sarnia-Lambton scores low on entrepreneurship, with a low level of innovation and R&D in local companies. The region needs to build a stronger level of innovation and creativity in business, arts and across the entire community mind-set.

The continuing growth and development of Lambton College cannot be underestimated in its importance to the future of the region. The College is increasingly focused on CRINK economy job development such as the hospitality and food industries, digital media and other contemporary courses.

These provide outstanding opportunities for job training and future careers for young people.

The issue, of course, is how to retain more of these graduates in the region. That is why the quality of life and the sense of place in Lambton County have become so important to the future prosperity and growth of the region.

Another critical initiative is The Research Park, a partnership between the University of Western Ontario, County of Lambton, City of Sarnia, and the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Development Commission. The project came about through collaborative effort applied to the pursuit of a common vision, resulting in an outstanding asset for the area.

These initiatives offer the opportunity to change attitudes and grow the creative economy. To do that, however, Sarnia and Lambton County must become more welcoming. There were a number of people who felt the region is not very welcoming to immigrants, foreign students and new residents.

The community must recognize the interdependence of emerging issues such as immigrant attraction, arts and culture, business incubation and retention, foreign investment, attraction of health care professionals and other elements that need to be brought together under an agenda for future community prosperity.

h) Collaboration and Networks in the Cultural Sector:

To succeed, there must be stronger networks and collaboration across the cultural sector, particularly the arts. While the heritage sector has been successful in building partnership models such as Heritage Sarnia-Lambton, the feeling was vigorously expressed that the arts community still had to come together with a common voice and shared objectives.

Some felt the revival of the Sarnia-Lambton Arts Council could be a vehicle for strengthening collaboration. Others felt a new County-wide mechanism was required. Regardless of which option the community may choose, it is a reality that the voice of the arts community is not united enough, loud enough or strong enough.

9. Lambton County and the CRINK Economy:



Photos by Hailey McHarg

The Economic Argument

The key to integrating culture in planning and decision-making across all municipal departments is building a shared understanding of a set of core planning assumptions, as identified below:

The County of Lambton, like many municipalities across the province, faces serious economic challenges due to a combination of economic restructuring, global pressures and demographic trends.

The region is forecast to lose 2% of its population each year, which holds significant long-term consequences for the future economic health of the County. Population retention and attraction strategies have become a prime focus for a number of rural areas in Canada.

Most future population growth is expected to come from immigration, seniors looking for a pleasant retirement community, and young couples seeking a safe, comfortable quality of life for their families.

It is in this context that development of a stronger, culturally-based sense of place, and a better shared image of Lambton County, are important. Many new strengths and attractions will be through the Creative, Innovative and Knowledge-based (CRINK) economy, which lie at the heart of a strong cultural and creative plan.

Successful municipalities in the future will be those that offer a high quality of life, develop an appealing and attractive community, encourage business innovation, support CRINK job creation, are diverse and welcoming, offer interesting public spaces and places, devise

environmentally sensitive and green-based programs, celebrate public art and local creators, and understand that linking these elements is what will provide a distinct advantage over competing communities around the world.

The search and appeal for talent is an important understanding for local governments today. It is not their role to create jobs, but rather to foster forward-looking communities and local environments to which prospective new residents will want to come, work, play and raise families.

This is why implementing this Cultural Plan for the County of Lambton will provide a greater awareness and understanding of the competitive search for talent, and the central role of the municipality in supporting creative industry and local economy. This plan will better position Lambton County in this global environment. And, it offers clear directions to the local community on strategic issues for the cultural sector, and how those are critical to the economic future success of the area.

Culture-Led Economic Development

In municipalities across Ontario that face similar challenges, culture-led economic development strategies are assuming greater importance. The contribution of culture to local economies is the result of several factors:

a) *Culture and Quality of Place:*

The traditional view was that economic competitiveness is driven by geographical characteristics such as raw materials, transportation or a skilled labour force. The more recent understanding is that members of the creative

In Canada, the culture sector plays a critical role in attracting people, business, and investment, and in distinguishing our country as a dynamic and exciting place to live and work. The culture sector also serves as a magnet for skilled and creative people. Today, there is also growing recognition of the important linkages between arts and culture industries and urban and rural development. Innovation is driven by creativity and diversity.

The Conference Board of Canada (2008).
Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada's Creative Economy
Foreward

labour force are highly mobile and so can choose where they want to live.

Because this creative labour force values diverse cultural and entertainment options and experiences, as well as interesting heritage assets and access to the natural environment, it is essential for communities to organize and cultivate their cultural resources to drive economic development.

This notion of culture-led economic development recognizes the value of place – that those environments where diverse cultural experiences and amenities are offered are better positioned to attract and retain creative people and businesses, and to generate wealth for their communities.

Recent research by the Martin Prosperity Institute on quality of place as an economic driver examined the importance of beauty and aesthetics as an attractor for creative talent¹. Findings confirm that perceived beauty or aesthetic character of a location has a positive and significant effect on community satisfaction. It was identified as one of the most significant factors, alongside economic security, good schools, and the opportunity for social interaction.

In Lambton County, the cultural depth of the community has been recognized as an important consideration, critical to issues of youth retention, recruitment of health care professionals, attraction of immigrants, and drawing a larger workforce to the knowledge-based creative economy.

¹Beautiful Places: The Role of Perceived Aesthetic Beauty in Community Satisfaction. Working Paper Series: Martin Prosperity Research. Prepared by: Richard Florida, University of Toronto, Charlotta Mellander, Jönköping International Business School, Kevin Stolarick, University of Toronto March 2009

Continuing this thrust for developing and supporting a strong, beautiful sense of place must be a continuing theme for the County. Public art installations, innovative design of public buildings, interesting landscaping and lighting of public spaces and insisting upon the private sector's participation in elevating these community standards will make Lambton County a more attractive, appealing and liveable region.

b) Culture and the Creative Economy:

In a model of economic development premised on culture and creativity, people take centre stage – what they know, what they enjoy, and where they work. The creative economy should be understood to underlie all sectors of the broader economy.

Creativity is evident in the introduction of new processes, the creation of a new product, and in the example of an industrial designer working in an automotive plant. In this view, the creative economy is defined by the skills, ideas and recreational choices of people – in other words, what they *do*, not *where they work*. These creative occupations are driven by ideas, innovation, knowledge, collaboration, creativity and the generation of intellectual property.

*Ontario in the Creative Age*² is a report commissioned by the Premier to establish a new vision of economic development for the province. The report places creative occupations within four broad types of work:

- **Creative occupations** (the creative class) – the growing number of people who are paid to think. These include scientists and technologists, artists and entertainers, and managers and analysts.

²Roger Martin and Richard Florida (2009). Ontario in the Creative Age. Martin Prosperity Institute.



Photos by Hailey McHarg

- **Service occupations** (the service class) – where work involves little autonomy, and occupations are focused on the delivery of services, including food-service workers, janitors, and clerks.
- **Physical occupations** (the working class) – consisting of people who use physical skills and carry out relatively repetitive tasks, such as tradespersons, mechanics, crane operators, and assembly line workers.
- **Resource occupations** (FFF) – consisting of occupations in fishing, farming and agriculture, forestry (FFF) and mining.

The County of Lambton requires a more thorough understanding of creative cultural industry and its breadth of occupations in the County. Undertaking a statistical analysis of this sector is a proposed action of the Cultural Plan outlined later in this report.

c) **Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainability:**

In addition to its contribution to local economies, culture has become an increased focus of planning in Ontario municipalities due to growing recognition of the important role it has to play in integrated planning for sustainability.

In Canada, greater attention to culture as the ‘fourth pillar’ of sustainability originates from the work of the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (the Harcourt Commission) struck in 2005 by the Federal Government to define a vision of Canadian cities and communities in 30 years, and to chart a path for realizing that vision.

³External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (2006). From Restless Communities to Resilient Places. Infrastructure Canada.

A core recommendation in the Committee’s 2006 final report, *From Restless Communities to Resilient Places*³, was the need for Canadian municipalities to embrace a vision of sustainability that addressed economic prosperity, social equity, environmental sustainability and culture. The Committee went further to say that culture was in fact the ‘glue’ binding together the other three, providing the sense of shared identity and purpose needed to tackle challenges together. Culture helps build social capital and contributes to vitality and resilience in communities.

The ‘four pillar’ sustainability framework assumed increased profile and importance in 2007 when the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the City of Toronto signed an agreement with the Federal Government related to the Transfer of Federal Gas Tax Revenues as part of The New Deal for Cities. Under the agreement, municipalities are required over the life of the agreement (until 2014) to develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSP). The Agreement defined an ICSP as:

A long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members that provides direction for the community to realize sustainability objectives, including social, cultural, environmental and economic objectives⁴.

The County of Lambton is in the process of developing an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP). At the same time, the Bluewater Sustainability Initiative is underway, and provides an opportunity for collaboration and support. This is an opportunity to engage school boards and the broad educational sector, as well as better utilizing all community resources.


⁴Integrated Community Sustainability Planning: A Background Paper. Prepared by Prime Minister’s External Advisory on Cities and Communities (September 21-23, 2005)

The challenges of integrating culture as a meaningful dimension of sustainability should not be underestimated. Planning frameworks and methodologies, including measures and indicators to track progress, are still emerging. For example, a pre-requisite for the meaningful integration of culture in sustainability planning is a comprehensive base of information and data on cultural resources (gathered through 'cultural mapping' techniques).

It has also been noted that there are municipalities elsewhere in Ontario seeking to integrate culture in a more meaningful way, which could share their experience with the County of Lambton in this endeavor. The Regional Municipality of Niagara is one example of a municipality with a reputation for leadership in integrated planning frameworks and approaches.

One action recommended as an early step of implementing the Cultural Plan is a staff forum at which the plan can be introduced. The session could include a facilitated discussion related to emerging thinking and approaches to integrated planning for sustainability. This might include featured speakers and planners from other municipalities in Ontario that are addressing these same issues.

Photos by Holli Griffith



Twenty-five years ago, municipalities came to understand the need to build environmental considerations into all planning and decision-making. Ten to fifteen years ago, they came to see a similar need to integrate social planning. Today, municipalities are beginning to build awareness and understanding of culture as a core planning responsibility.

10. A Cultural Plan for the County of Lambton:

Vision Statement Summary:

The County of Lambton believes creativity, culture and quality of place are fundamental to building a sustainable, prosperous and diversified economy in Lambton County and providing a superior quality of life for our residents.

1. Vision Statement Summary:

The County of Lambton believes creativity, culture and quality of place are fundamental to building a sustainable, prosperous and diversified economy in Lambton County and providing a superior quality of life for our residents.

2. Administration and Governance

The County of Lambton was assigned responsibility for culture as part of the Sarnia-Lambton Act in 1998. Since then the County has played the central role of providing facilities, delivering community programs and planning for the conservation of important natural and cultural heritage resources, among others.

These cultural activities will remain critical commitments. However, the assignment of the cultural mandate to the County occurred at a time when there was a much narrower understanding of municipal responsibility for culture. The department is now being asked to take up additional responsibilities:

- Integrating culture into plans and policies across all departments (applying a 'cultural lens' to municipal planning and decision-making).
- Establishing and sustaining strong and effective partnerships with business and community partners.
- Building the capacity of the creative and cultural sector by facilitating collaboration, shared resources, and developing shared goals to ensure sustainability.

Given these new demands and new opportunities to realize the full potential of culture, it is important to define a new set of arrangements for the administration and governance of culture in the County of Lambton.

There are a variety of models available from other municipalities for how culture can be effectively administered in terms of departmental structures and advisory bodies. Any models and structures for the County must take into account the complexities of the two-tiers of government, the mix of urban and rural areas, among other aspects of governance in the County.

We have set out below what we believe to be the four important dimensions of an effective and efficient approach to the administration and governance of culture in the County of Lambton:

1. Administrative Structure
2. Creative County Committee
3. Creative County Fund
4. Lambton Cultural Forum



1. Administrative Structure:

As part of the research for this report, the consultants studied the structure of the County's external agencies and commissions. We also examined how the Cultural Services Division fits into the County's administrative structure. We then compared that situation with examples of successful operations in other Ontario communities.

There is no 'one size fits all' model for administering culture in municipalities. Here are three common models:

1. Some cities consolidate Economic Development, Culture and Tourism into one large department. This recognizes their inter-dependence and allows close coordination of these three important functions.
2. Some municipalities operate dedicated Culture Departments, but most operate Culture as part of larger divisions such as Community Services or Parks and Recreation.
3. Some municipalities operate culture as a function of the City Manager's Office in recognition of the cross-departmental nature of cultural issues and values.

These administrative departments are then supported by external agencies, some dedicated exclusively to culture (such as Cultural Roundtables) but many with close relations to arm's length Economic Development, Tourism Boards or other agencies where the municipality is the primary funder. Typically in these agencies an independent Board of Directors with municipal appointees is the legal entity responsible. A paid Executive Director and staff then operate that organization. The point here is that whatever the municipal administrative arrangement for culture, it cannot function effectively without mechanisms to support strong business and community partners.

In the case of the County of Lambton, the administrative structure related to culture was found to be quite unique.

The situation of having Culture led by the County as a specific responsibility of the upper tier of government may be considered an innovation in all of Ontario.

However, the necessary partnership between the Cultural Services Division and a strong community agency able to support the Division's efforts, particularly one able to leverage economic development opportunities has not been addressed. In the next section we propose a model for building a strong partnership that not only affirms, but further supports, the unique positioning of the Cultural Services Division.

Some responsibilities to support cultural development were assigned to Tourism Sarnia Lambton (TSL) in recent years, but internal management challenges and staff changes meant the opportunity was not fully embraced. TSL was the subject of an important review in 2010, and has emerged with a stronger management team and vision. We believe the agency is capable of playing a strong partnership and supportive --but not lead-- role in cultural development, given its other pressures and priorities.

In discussions with the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership (SLEP) about expanding their role in culture and culture-led economic development, there was recognition of culture's importance and an interest in supporting the development agenda. However, indications were that considerable additional resources would be required for SLEP to play a leadership role.

Cultural Services Division Mandate:

Based on discussions and research, it is appropriate that the Cultural Services Division remain the lead administrative agency in the County, but with an expanded mandate and set of responsibilities. To date, the primary focus of the Cultural Services Division has been the administration of library, heritage and arts facilities, the delivery of their programs, and providing a supportive role for community-based cultural groups across the county.

To effectively implement the Cultural Plan and continue to provide leadership in cultural planning and development in the County, the Cultural Services Division requires a broadened mandate.

Proposed Mandate:

The Cultural Services Division will provide leadership and support to advance cultural development in the County of Lambton for economic, social and broad community benefit.

Roles:

In support of this mandate, the Division will assume responsibilities in four functional areas:

- *Planning and Policy* – Develop municipal policies and plans in support of cultural and broader economic and community development agendas.
- *Capacity Building* – Advocating the importance of culture within the County and beyond, providing advice and support to individuals and organizations engaged in cultural development.
- *Program Delivery* – Support the delivery of community programs, projects, festivals and celebrations in collaboration with local municipalities, business and community partners.

- *Investment and Resource Development* – selectively and strategically advance cultural development opportunities by leveraging funds from senior government, foundations and the private sector.

Lambton County Cultural Services Division is already acknowledged as a leading model amongst Ontario municipalities. The expanded responsibilities outlined above provide an opportunity for the Division to build on and extend its vision and reputation. Modest new resources need to be provided to the Division to effectively rise to the leadership challenge, for which a suitable business case should be made in the 2012 budget.

2. Creative County Committee:

As noted above, the Cultural Services Division cannot realize its new mission without a strong advisory body, and a mechanism to support essential business and community partnerships.

London established a formal Council committee consisting of the Mayor, five Councillors, and a dozen representatives of key sectors from the community (arts, heritage, business, downtown, housing, sports, library, youth, creative industries and neighbourhoods). The committee meets several times a year, and is responsible for allocation of the Creative City Fund which supports innovative new ideas; evaluation and implementation of the Creative City Task Force recommendations; and other initiatives.

Orillia chose to establish a Cultural Roundtable with representation drawn from Council, municipal staff, culture, community groups and business interests. The group meets monthly to oversee the implementation of the cultural plan and to pursue specific cultural opportunities and initiatives. Other cities have developed still other solutions.

The expanded responsibilities outlined in this report provide an opportunity for the Cultural Services Division to build on and extend its vision and reputation as a leading model amongst Ontario municipalities.

Having considered the range of models, and with consultation from the Steering Group, this report is recommending that County Council establish a new Creative County Committee (CCC). Membership of the Committee would include:

- The Warden or designate, plus four Councillors representing the four quadrants of the County (Central Lambton, Lambton Shores, Sarnia, South Lambton). The Chair of the Committee should be a Lambton County Councillor. This will ensure continuity for implementing the Cultural Plan.
- The General Manager of Cultural Services, plus three municipal staff members drawn from the department, to serve in a non-voting advisory capacity.
- Senior representatives from key economic partners such as SLEP, TSL and Lambton College.
- At least one First Nations representative.
- Up to 10 community appointees representing key cultural, community and business interests.

Meetings would be held quarterly, with the CCC responsible for implementation of the Cultural Plan, allocation of the new Creative County Fund, and strategically responding to new cultural development partnerships and opportunities as they arise.

3. Lambton Creative County Fund:

A key initiative we recommend is the establishment of a new Creative County Fund (CCF). Enabling the CCF requires an annual investment of \$75,000 for support of innovative and creative initiatives in Lambton County. Those proposals might be for neighbourhood beautification, establishing a new festival or event, a public art project, a local food celebration or a myriad of other initiatives.

Clearly-articulated selection criterion would restrict funding to one-time proposals, with preference for bold and fun, fresh and innovative, creative and sustainable concepts with the ability to generate economic, social, environmental or cultural benefit to the community. Whenever possible, County resources should leverage external funding opportunities such as Trillium Foundation, ArtsVest or local municipal partner funds.

To ensure county-wide support and equitability, we recommend that the fund be allocated as follows:

- a) \$10,000 for initiatives in each of the four quadrants in the County
- b) \$35,000 for projects anywhere in the County
- c) Funds can be allocated in any amount, depending on need and a viable business plan

We further suggest that the application forms be made available on-line, be brief and straightforward, and that they allow non-traditional organizations equal opportunity to be considered.

Establishing this new fund will ensure the community becomes aware of County Council's commitment to culture as both a community and an economic driver. It also spreads tangible support across the entire county, to encourage interesting new ideas, projects and partnerships.

4. Lambton Cultural Forum:

In order to report back to the community on the successful implementation of this plan, and new initiatives that will emerge as the plan proceeds, we recommend the CCC host an annual Lambton Cultural Forum.

The event should move to various locations in the county, and adopt a fresh format each year. One particular topic should be featured at each session (heritage building designation, tourism development, creative cultural industries, downtown revitalization, etc). Experts may be brought in to stimulate the conversation but the focus should be on profiling local talent and success stories. Local food and entertainment should always be featured.

This type of community-based platform serves multiple purposes, from garnering media attention to celebrating local food, culture and progress. It is a chance for the County to thank the community, perhaps with a new Warden's Award of Excellence for cultural activity, youth programs, and so on.

It is also an opportunity to bring together people from across the county to experience different cultures and ideas from other parts of the county, meet and make new friends, and create important links and partnerships for cultural and business organizations. One of the surprises in the research for the Cultural Plan was how little interchange and movement exists inside the county to support culture, a situation that can be remedied in part by the mounting of a Cultural Summit.

Photo by Glenn Ogilvie



11. Strategies and Actions:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:

Integrated Planning For Culture

1. Adopting a Cultural Lens

One defining direction of municipal cultural planning is the integration of cultural resources and considerations across all aspects of municipal planning and decision-making – what is sometimes referred to as ‘adopting a cultural lens.’

What this means in practice is examining municipal decision-making from the perspective of the contribution that cultural resources can make to the economic prosperity, social equity, environmental responsibility and cultural vitality of the community. Adopting a cultural lens requires asking three questions:

1. How can cultural resources help address community issues and priorities (e.g. need to diversify the economy, attract new investment, retain youth, and increase tourism)?
2. How do local planning decisions impact cultural resources (e.g. the impact of new developments on cultural and natural heritage resources)?
3. How can cultural assets and resources enhance the quality of place, the built environment and the public realm (e.g. public art installations, urban design guidelines, public art commissions for new buildings)?

The Cultural Plan encourages the adoption of a cultural lens, and a more integrated approach to planning and building community in several ways:

- By establishing a shared set of definitions and planning assumptions to support communication across departments
- By establishing new administrative and governance mechanisms to support both cross-sectoral and cross-department planning

- By establishing a stronger database of cultural industries and cultural resources across the County, to inform planning and economic development strategies.

Success with introducing more integrated approaches to planning for culture in the County of Lambton requires the County to join leading jurisdictions in changing the perceived role of municipal government from the traditional “plan, provide, deliver” model, to a collaborative and dynamic “facilitate, convene, catalyst-broker” model. To succeed, the County of Lambton must embrace this perspective and establish the partnerships necessary to advance its community-building agenda, on behalf of all.

2. New Official Plans

The coordinated development of new Official Plans for the County of Lambton, City of Sarnia and other municipal official plans presents an enormous opportunity to ensure culture is well-integrated within these core planning documents.

The timing is ideal to include a chapter, or a thread throughout, dedicated to culture in all of these new Official Plans, drawing on the planning assumptions and recommendations set out in the Cultural Plan.

While culture can be given enhanced profile and ‘rooted’ in a dedicated chapter, policy issues and requirements related to culture will also need to be referenced throughout the Plans.

Entrenchment in Official Plans also is symbolically important, signaling the County and the City’s recognition of culture as a core planning and economic consideration, and a fresh approach to the business of governance.



Photo by Glenn Ogilvie

...Successful public art programs help communities develop and express their unique character and identity, which in turn, are proven to draw people and investment...

Communities such as London and Vaughan have incorporated culture into their Official Plan. It is reflected in various sections, including heritage building protection, downtown revitalization, flexible zoning to allow live-work spaces and studios, public art commissions, a Section 37 bonus charged to developers to support a Public Art Fund, raising urban design requirements, and more.

While it is beyond the scope of this Cultural Plan to make specific policy recommendations for these Official Plans, the document provides a framework and set of ideas from which to draw.

It is also recommended that compatible wording dealing with the Culture and Heritage sectors be utilized by the various Official Plans throughout the county.

We suggest strongly that a key direction to be affirmed in these new Official Plans concerns visual enhancement of the public realm.

'Public realm' refers to spaces that are in public ownership and used in everyday life. These include parks and greenbelts, downtown public spaces, streetscapes, and pedestrian or transit corridors. In the public realm, culture is advanced through the design of places that encourage social interaction and exchange.

Public art plays a powerful role in public realm enhancements. Public art not only invests a space with place-making qualities and aesthetic appeal, but wields the capacity to interpret the unique historic, social and cultural contexts that distinguish that space.

Successful public art programs help communities develop and express their unique character and identity, which in turn, are proven to draw people and investment.

As a result, this plan recommends that the Council ask the new CCC to develop a Public Art Policy including consideration of implementing a 1% commitment to fund public art programs (ie. 1% of major above-ground municipal projects), establish a new Public Art Reserve Fund for both public and private sector contributions, and outline policies and guidelines to encourage regional artists and native art throughout the county.

3. Integrated Community Sustainability Plan

Both the County and the City have begun the development of an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP). As noted earlier in this report, ICSPs are formally defined as embracing 'four pillars' – economic prosperity, social equity, environmental responsibility and cultural vitality. To date, the Lambton approach has embraced a 'three pillar' framework, combining the social and cultural dimensions of sustainability.

Full and meaningful integration of culture as the fourth pillar is the currently prevailing municipal model. There is growing evidence of returns experienced among Ontario municipalities by fully embracing the fourth pillar. One practical action step suggested is for the County and the City of Sarnia to convene a forum of planners and representatives from municipalities with experience in this area.

This report emphatically recommends that Culture be recognized as the 'fourth pillar of support' in the City and the County's sustainability plans.

Cultural Mapping is the identification and recording of the cultural resources and activities of a community or region.

4. Cultural Mapping

In 2007 the County of Lambton Cultural Services Division made a start on consolidating information on cultural resources. Since that time, methodologies have evolved and become more sophisticated and provide a basis for the county moving to extend this initial work. The County is now moving data between online platforms (GIS to Google Earth, for example) to make it more accessible to the public.

A great deal of digital information about Lambton County already exists, all of which has been collected by different organizations for different reasons, using different formats and saving it to different places. Many of these resources, however, are not available online.

A variety of tools and methodologies for consolidating information from sources such as Statistics Canada, local Yellow Pages, heritage inventories and registers, and local databases held by municipalities or community-based groups such as arts councils or historical societies have emerged in Ontario. These pilot practices from elsewhere will provide a valuable model as the County moves forward with the mapping agenda.

Another opportunity is emerging through modern technology—Open Data. Many municipalities are now allowing public access to a variety of public data and resources, ranging from bus schedules to heritage trees. This is a maturing of the use of data for a variety of public purposes. The manipulation of such public data offers interesting new opportunities to engage the public and provide public benefits.

Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 1:

- 1.1 Ensure that definitions and underlying planning assumptions set out in the Cultural Plan inform the development of Official Plans for the County of Lambton and the City of Sarnia
- 1.2 Convene a forum of planners from other Ontario municipalities that have effectively integrated culture into Official Plan, and have experience with the ICSP process.
- 1.3 Develop a cultural mapping strategy based on leading practice in Ontario.
- 1.4 Adopt Culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability.



Petrolia Grand Trunk Station 1911

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:

Marketing And Promoting Cultural Resources

Celebrating Our Cultural Strengths

It is important to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary richness of cultural resources in Lambton County. From the internationally recognized Oil Heritage District to extensive nature trails and natural heritage, to a thriving arts and theatre scene in Grand Bend, to the growing vitality of downtown Sarnia, from the Petrolia Opera House to galleries and museums across the county– all of these are strengths and resources to be celebrated.

The cultural plan seeks to strengthen these assets, and then to leverage them in support of broader economic and community development objectives in the County.

A further recommendation is that the County establishes a communications vehicle (perhaps a private-sector collaboration, offered semi-annually or quarterly) designed to heighten public awareness and understanding of the breadth of County services across all Divisions, the range of programs and partnerships delivered by cultural services, and in particular to explain the roles divided between lower-tier municipalities, the County of Lambton and the City of Sarnia.

Stronger and More Creative Marketing

However, one of the most consistent messages heard throughout the community engagement was the low level of awareness of Lambton County's unique and outstanding cultural and natural heritage resources, due to inadequate marketing and promotion.

There was a call for more marketing of artisans, creators and their products, and the use of creative marketing approaches such as social media. Many felt there needed to be stronger 'bundle' marketing of cultural assets, tempting visitors with a larger, integrated experience based on unifying themes and stories.

Others believed that the County's exceptional trail network presents a base from which to create integrated marketing initiatives that can draw attention to Lambton's cultural stories and interpretation. Certainly there has been excellent work done on Farm-gate tours and local food opportunities, and maps and directions are now available on line and through printed sources.

Marketing all of the region's assets is an important step forward and must continue in a collaborative process with the county's economic partners. And to reach the younger audience, social media must be better utilized.

Cultural and Heritage Portals

Other municipalities in Ontario have established single-point access to a wide range of local cultural and heritage resources through dedicated portals. A range of options exist, and the County has already begun an examination of how to leverage existing investments and technologies to build such a portal for the County. Cultural portals not only raise awareness of tangible cultural resources, but are vehicles by which powerful stories of the County may be shared.

It should be noted that the above marketing issues and the recommendations to follow hold equal implications for Strategic Direction 4: Cultural Tourism.

Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 2:

- 2.1 Develop an overall communications plan that utilizes the full range of tools to raise awareness of Lambton's cultural resources
- 2.2 Work in close association with Tourism Sarnia-Lambton and the new Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) 1 to support marketing and tourism promotion of Lambton County's many cultural and heritage assets.
- 2.3 Examine leading practice of culture and heritage portals in Ontario to determine the most effective format for Lambton County.
- 2.4 Make a business case in the 2012 budget for the investment necessary to create a cultural portal that bundles the Lambton cultural community online.
- 2.5 Adapt and better utilize social media in the County's communications and marketing efforts.

“I’ve welcomed the chance to support the direction of this plan because I’ve come to understand how cultural expressions define our ‘quality of space’ as a place to live. I’m thrilled with the outcome here: a visionary document that will help us grow culture as an economic driver in our future.”

Bev MacDougall, Councillor

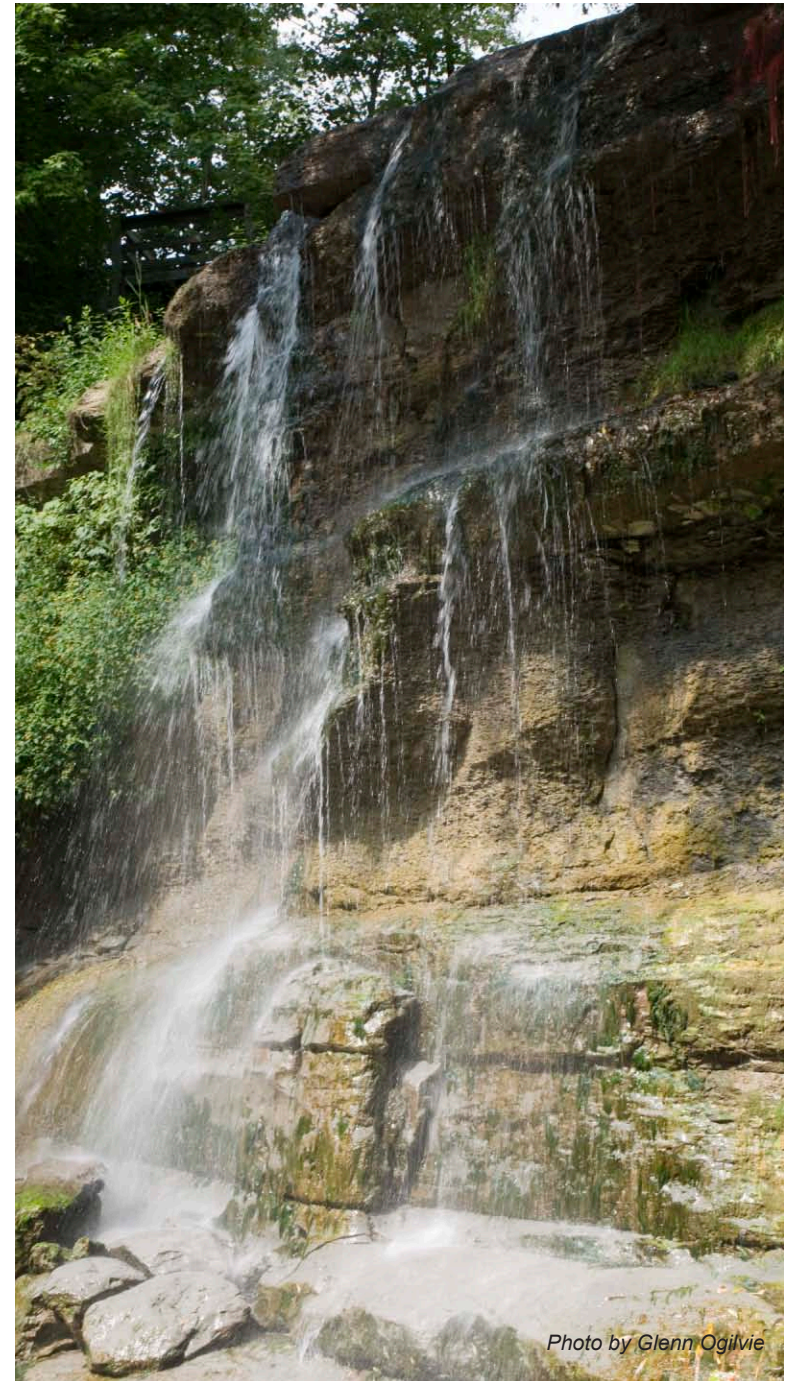


Photo by Glenn Ogilvie

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

Growing The Creative Cultural Economy

Culture Entrenched in a New Economy

A theme heard in many consultations was the need to broaden appreciation for the ability of creativity and culture to moderate the effect of shifts in the traditional economic base of the County.

In 2007 the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership (SLEP) Development Plan first recognized culture-led economic development, the value of creative cultural industries, and cultural tourism in particular. Recommendations included undertaking cultural asset mapping and development of a municipal cultural plan in particular. For the first time locally, the SLEP Plan drew attention to the interdependence of strong creative/cultural industries and the ability of the County to develop a more successful tourism industry.

The 2010 SLEP Strategic Plan placed less direct emphasis on creative cultural industries to focus on broadening and diversifying the economy by increasing knowledge-based and creative economy jobs.

During the community engagement process for this plan, the General Manager of SLEP expressed support for the municipal cultural plan, and for expanding the creative cultural economy of the area. SLEP interest was also expressed in exploring creative economy initiatives through partnership with Lambton College and the UWO Research Park.

Improve Data on Creative Cultural Jobs

A barrier to the County of Lambton recognizing opportunities in creative cultural industries is the lack of hard data for the current state and projected growth of creative cultural occupations.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' (OMAFRA) *Competitive Advantage Analysis for a Creative Economy Tool* was designed to help municipalities identify the relative size and performance of cultural industries and occupations based on Statistics Canada's *Framework for Culture Statistics*.⁵

The OMAFRA data provides a clearer understanding of cultural employment within a community, identifies areas of job growth, relative specialization and other opportunities to drive culture-led economic development.

Another largely untapped source of data on cultural occupations is local Workforce Planning Boards. Data available to these Boards allows a fuller examination of how cultural occupations contribute to the economy. For example, this data provide cross-tabulations that illustrate which industries employ the most cultural workers.

Encouraging Creative Enterprise

Artists and creative enterprises (usually small, independent, start-up businesses) need affordable, flexible spaces, often with short-term leases. They choose locations close to institutions that provide opportunities for continuous interactions with social and professional networks—in other words, creative clusters.

Attracting and retaining youth, young professionals, international students, skilled new immigrants and entrepreneurial investment are strategic objectives for many cities across Canada, for social and economic reasons. The creative cultural sector is a powerful means of achieving these objectives.

⁵<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=81-595-MIE2004021&ISSNOTE=1&lang=eng>

...Artists and creative enterprises (usually small, independent, start-up businesses) need affordable, flexible spaces, often with short-term leases....

As a complex mix of industries that range from the traditional arts to magazine publishing, digital media to local food creations, the cultural sector provides a growing number of highly skilled employment and enterprise opportunities for all types of people, especially for youth and young professionals entering the work force or starting their own enterprise. Other factors of retention include affordable live-work space, cross-generational mentoring within the cultural community, and sense of place and community pride.

There is another rapidly rising category of CRINK economy entrepreneurs as well: seniors and retired people. They often launch an interesting second career, frequently arts-related, in wine-making, woodworking, B&Bs, writing or photography, nature interpretation, natural resource preservation and many others. These active people also support the local food movement, sustainability issues, volunteerism, and community events and involvement with local charities and social/church programs. Innovation and great ideas are never limited by age!

Some cities have moved to establish 'creative hubs' or incubators dedicated to providing art workshop and retail spaces for those working in creative cultural industries to come together to share ideas, forge connections and grow partnerships.

Such hubs serve as a catalyst for creativity across the entire community, involving all generations. The Research Park in Sarnia is an example of this concept from a research point of view; a downtown cultural hub for visual and performing arts would be another concept, perhaps in a renovated heritage property near the library-art centre.

Youth Attraction and Retention

One of the themes that emerged from consultation was the loss of graduates from Lambton County due to lack of job opportunities, and to the lack of arts and entertainment options.

It is felt that this situation is improving slowly, and that's an important step forward for the city and the county.

Significant improvements have been made in recent years as evidenced by the success of First Fridays and Artwalk.

The construction of the new Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery, and the possible redevelopment of the Sarnia Library, perhaps as Sarnia's centenary project, are significant initiatives and major incentives for retaining talent and making downtown Sarnia a more vibrant cultural and entertainment hub.

In a recent survey by the Sarnia Chamber of Commerce 'attending/participating in arts and cultural activities' was ranked one of the top priorities in spending time in the downtown by young professionals. (Ranked equal to business networking and dining out).

Regardless of any municipality's best efforts, a portion of the 'best and brightest' will move away and 'spread their wings' to take up new jobs and lifestyles. That has happened for generations.

However, there are indications that approximately one third will 'return home' at some point in their lives, perhaps to look after aging parents, or to seek a quiet and safer community for their young family. They tire of the high costs, long commutes and gridlock, and personal security issues associated with metropolitan areas.

Photos by Hailey McHarg



Councils should remain optimistic about the chance to repatriate some portion of these local residents during their careers, but for the pitch to succeed the community must offer contemporary, wired work environments and pleasant public spaces for recreation, leisure and play.

Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 3:

- 3.1 Conduct an analysis of the creative cultural industries and jobs in the County of Lambton, drawing on data and analysis provided by OMAFRA and others.
- 3.2 Consider the creation of an arts/cultural hub in downtown Sarnia, as a way to incubate growth in creative cultural enterprises.
- 3.3 Lobby, partner and invest to become a fully-wired County, giving all areas ready access to modern technology—broadband, hi-speed internet, etc.
- 3.4 Convene a creative cultural industries 'Forum' as a collaboration of the County, Lambton College, TSL and SLEP.
- 3.5 Link with Lambton College to support internship and mentor programs for students, including summer jobs in arts, public health, culture and the full range of municipal services.
- 3.6 Aggressively support foreign students that visit the

County, perhaps with an annual beef Bar B Q or a memorable oil field welcome: such events celebrate what makes Lambton unique.

- 3.7 Seek out CRINK economy opportunities suited to seniors and retired entrepreneurs, and support their initiatives and ideas.
- 3.8 Develop an 'Emerging Leaders' program to encourage students to become involved in community life, including sitting as youth advisor on various civic committees and Boards.
- 3.9 Further develop green trails, greenbelts, natural environment areas and parks to attract visitors, naturalists and people interested in ecological tourism.
- 3.10 Develop a set of support programs for owners of heritage properties through a Lambton Heritage Advisory Committee.
- 3.11 Encourage the creation of a Lambton County Youth Council to engage young people, and provide a forum and feed-back on programs and opportunities to the CCC.
- 3.12 Review 'Open Data' best practice in Ontario. Consider freely sharing the collected total of cultural and natural heritage data with any interested groups or individuals, on the internet.

“In the professional creative industry I represent it’s gratifying to see a Cultural Plan being proposed as a tool to enrich the economic vitality of Sarnia Lambton as a place to work, raise a family and to stay.”

Marty Raaymakers
MIG Engineering

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4:

Growing Cultural Tourism

An Expanding Sector

Tourism is one of the largest industries in Canada and a growing component of economic prosperity in many cities.

Cultural tourists are more highly educated, stay longer at their destination, earn more, spend more, and choose commercial accommodation rather than stay with friends or relatives.

Demand for cultural experiences in Lambton is growing as more travelers seek out 'real experiences' that include cultural landscapes and special events that are authentic, distinctive and reflect the sense of place.

Tourists are growing increasingly sophisticated – they are tech literate and search out experiences that educate, elevate and entertain.

Capitalizing on Lambton's cultural tourism potential requires a campaign of ideas that drives storytelling on a civic scale.

It is as much about an immersive experience of "place" as it is about specific individual attractions. The County's unique oil heritage and its proud heritage of lakeside dancehalls provide powerful ways to promote Lambton as a special place blessed with unique stories and memorable experiences.

The formation of the new Regional Tourism Organization (RTO)¹ together with the renewal of Tourism Sarnia-Lambton sets the stage for a stronger focus on cultural tourism, one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry.

Lambton County residents attending the public forums called for more innovative marketing strategies, making use of cultural portals and websites, and better 'bundling'

of cultural itineraries and experiences. RTO's across the province are developing strategies to exploit synergies across cultural, agri- and culinary tourism markets and opportunities.

Downtown renewal strategies in historic centres across the county, combined with a focus on more festivals and activities for tourists and local residents alike, were also identified as worthy goals.

Overall, there are significant opportunities to enhance the county's tourist appeal through greater promotion and support for the 3Cs of Tourism: Culture, Culinary and Creative Tourism.

Many tourists aren't interested in passive tourism attractions, but prefer learning, touching, feeling, eating, smelling or building. In other words, people are looking for experiences. They make travel plans based on where they can find those experiences, and post-vacation, they enjoy telling friends about their unique experiences.

Many people today don't care to walk passively through a gallery--they want to experience drawing a model, or learn about a sculpture technique.

They don't want to simply dine in a restaurant--they want to connect with where the local food was produced, pick the produce, and even cook the meal.

They don't want to just admire an historic watercraft at the dockside--they want to climb aboard and then learn how that form of vessel was built.

They want to experience music, theatre, galleries, dance, festivals, and events.

They want to get to know local people, experience the heritage, celebrate local cultures and taste their foods, and enjoy the natural history of the region.

This fascination with realism presents unexplored opportunities for Lambton County to consider as a part of its tourist economy and development plan.

Tourism also holds another important economic benefit to the County—it is a chance for potential residents to ‘try out’ the area to see if they’d like to move here.

As more and more Toronto-area seniors decide whether to stay or to relocate for their retirement years, Lambton County offers an affordable, nearby and pleasant lifestyle. A vibrant arts, culture and heritage scene make the county an attractive and interesting community that stands out amongst its many competitors. The benefits are both economic and social: Cultural Tourism is an important foundation of the renewed economy.

Photos by Holli Griffith



Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 4:

- 4.1 Request that TSL develop a Cultural Tourism strategy to take advantage of the economic opportunities from culture, and report back to County Council.
- 4.2 Coordinate a strategy with SLEP, TSL and the County to exploit economic opportunities in culture and tourism such as program nodes for active retirees, joint promotion of arts festivals throughout the County, linking local food to restaurateurs, and so on.
- 4.3 As part of the above economic development plan, establish mentoring, intern and job-shadowing opportunities with Lambton College, secondary and post-secondary institutions and across the hospitality, food and tourism industries.
- 4.4 More emphasis and support on festivals and events throughout the county.
- 4.5 Work with the Tourism sector to encourage young people to take local tourist sector jobs and move up in the industry; this will encourage students and local kids to stay in the area and get good jobs locally. A central tourism-related job registry/web site could be beneficial to list all tourism and hospitality jobs in Sarnia and Lambton County.
- 4.6 Establish an ‘Innovation Fund’ to support new ideas from young people to start their own businesses in the tourism and local food sectors.
- 4.7 Vigorously promote the cultural agenda, its job opportunities, facilities and programs.
- 4.8 Develop a web-based calendar of events, programs and attractions.
- 4.9 Consider the re-introduction of the “Doors Open” weekend to encourage visitors and educate locals about the unique attractions and heritage facilities throughout the county.
- 4.10 Support for the many trails (natural, heritage, food, etc) that exist and can be developed throughout the county.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5:

Culture and Local Food

Many communities are exploiting local cultural events and experiences that optimize local farms and fresh food production. Local food strategies encourage restaurants to develop local food offerings, stimulate the expansion of Farmers' Markets, and seek stronger and more integrated approaches to the tourism and hospitality industry.

In November 2010, Lambton County Health Unit hosted a significant conference encouraging a "Lambton County Food Revolution". A wide variety of political, community, health, agri-business and other leaders attended. Prominent guest speakers spoke about the importance of food and municipal government, and the session drew front-page coverage in the Sarnia Observer.

The conference helped solidify the growing community understanding that food actually drives many aspects of the local agenda in Sarnia and Lambton County. Food is a critical element in everything from attracting tourists, to how we lay out new sub-divisions, to supporting local producers and enhancing the Lambton County economy.

Food and agriculture (defined here in general terms as everything from fruit wineries to farm-gate sales) are one of the most distinctive and appealing elements to Lambton County, yet they continue to be under-valued as an economic driver and as a tourism attraction.

There is a strong case to be made that an integrated cultural/food/tourism/economic development strategy will become a significant and growing sector of the Sarnia-Lambton County economy. For example, food-processing in the GTA is now a larger sector of the economy than automotive manufacturing.

The local food agenda is also a strong connector with the growing cultural sector, and the understanding that links with heritage properties, downtown revitalization, arts opportunities and building interesting neighbourhoods are all inter-connected.

The Cultural Tourism and Culinary Tourism strategies identified in this report also fit beautifully with results of the "Our Vision Our Community" Summit meeting held in 2010. That session identified several key strategic elements as part of the next stage of the cultural planning process. Food businesses and food-related opportunities represent a critical part of many key strategies identified in that report, including:

The agri-food business is a strong and growing part of local economies. Certainly Lambton County has a well-established and successful agricultural history. Today there is timely opportunity for 'The Local Food Revolution', with all its benefits and challenges.

Many young people get their first jobs in the service economy, restaurants, bars, farms and other parts of the food and hospitality industries. This is a way for the local communities to connect with young people and to get them entry-level positions, then grow their jobs and career opportunities.

The County should consider mentoring, work placement, co-op and other techniques while students are in college, to provide them with full participation and commitment to the local economy. These opportunities make bright young people understand that good job prospects are available in Lambton County.

Local food is quickly proving to be a major part of any dynamic community. People love farmer's markets, farm-gate sales, local foods that are unique to that region, and great restaurants using local products.

Agriculture is a well-established, substantial part of the Lambton County economy. The challenge now is to develop secondary and tertiary opportunities—specialized crops, product refinement, shipping and logistics centres, crop research, greener production techniques, opportunities in bio-fuels and other agri-food technology.

Can the region support a Food Terminal? Can it take advantage of its immediate US border access? Can Sarnia become a leader in community food security?

The agri-food business is a growing part of the Ontario economy. While traditional auto manufacturing has suffered a downturn, food production is increasing. New ethnic market segments are emerging, and specialty foods are taking a greater share of grocery purchases.

Farmers Markets are growing in popularity. Lambton County enjoys markets in Petrolia, Grand Bend, Forest, and Sarnia, as well as farm-gate sales throughout the county.

There are many opportunities to exploit the region's strong agricultural foundation. There are ten actions recommended that the County should consider through its Creative County Committee working with TSL, the local Health Unit, Ministry of Agricultural and Food, the restaurant industry and SLEP:

Photos by Hailey McHarg



Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 5:

- 5.1 Develop linkages between local producers and local restaurants.
- 5.2 Develop a “Savour Lambton County” promotion to salute local food suppliers and attract tourists.
- 5.3 Greater support for farm-gate tours and visits (maps are now available and should be disseminated widely and supported by municipal and TSL assets).
- 5.4 Routinely add local food to municipal events, and acknowledge the suppliers.
- 5.5 Review products sold at municipal facilities and snack booths.
- 5.6 Work with federal and provincial Agriculture departments to identify and support new market segments and opportunities, including manufacturing and packaging.
- 5.7 Connect with the proposed food-manufacturing college proposed for the lands across from Conestoga College in Kitchener for student internship programs and other opportunities.
- 5.8 Promote the Farmers’ Markets throughout the county.
- 5.9 Encourage local restaurant owners to feature and promote local produce, meat, poultry, fish and other products from the region.
- 5.10 Develop a local food security plan with the Health Unit as the lead.

“This County Cultural Plan complements our new Lambton Shores Official Plan well, and brings a fresh focus to agricultural tourism, the artisans of the area, and will benefit the entire community.”

Bill Weber, Mayor
Lambton Shores

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6:

Enriching The Lambton County Identity

Shared Identity

One of the challenges facing the County is the lack of a strong shared identity as both a means of connecting communities in common efforts across the County, and as a means of promoting the county in a unified and compelling way to visitors and tourists.

Other successful marketing and place branding strategies aimed at telling an authentic and compelling story of a community or larger region recognize that these strategies must emerge from the culture and identity of that place.

Stronger information and an understanding of County cultural resources and stories must enhance a shared identity for Lambton County.

There must be a stronger understanding of cultural resources across Lambton County as the basis from which stories and strategies can emerge with the potential to work toward a larger shared identity for Lambton County.

Community Resources

Culture will play an increasingly vital role in new and refurbished community facilities across the County.

One great example is the new Legacy Centre in Thedford. It includes a library, child care centre, state of the art hall and kitchen, ice surface and change rooms to offer a complete community facility. The physical place then offers lots of opportunities for cultural partnerships and community activities within this multi-use facility.

As all municipalities look at the local tax burden, efficient and effective use of public dollars and innovative new partnerships to create new public spaces will demand flexibility, originality and creativity.

Lambton County's well-established network of community libraries offers a marvelous opportunity to have them evolve into becoming the cultural hub of rural towns and villages across Lambton County.

As municipalities struggle to support and ensure the future of small, rural communities, this kind of new thinking offers hope for supporting rural society.

At a time when the other orders of government are closing local schools, hospitals and even post offices, municipalities are stepping up to ensure some sense of community remains.

Culture—in its broadest definition—will drive much of this local action. Developing a cultural node in a small town or village can be a cost-effective solution in the face of an often declining school/church network support situation.

Having the library as a foundational base for a community facility is a new way of delivering local support and social programs to maintain and enhance that neighbourhood.

Programs and services can then be tailored to the needs of the local community.

This new, innovative way of looking at local service delivery and of providing smaller but badly needed community facilities will be driven by the local community, but at the heart of it will be the culture-related facilities and programs that can keep the local neighbourhood functioning.

Place Branding

Niagara Originals was a place-branding strategy that emerged from a major regional economic development forum in 2007 called Niagara Palooza. One of the primary needs identified at the forum was the absence of a coherent brand for the region. While the Falls enjoyed world-wide recognition, the story of the region beyond the Falls was fractured and confusing.

What emerged from the place-branding research and consultation was a powerful story of originality. For tourists, Niagara's abundance of "original" experiences includes everything from the drama of its great physical assets to its theatre and wineries to its history of entrepreneurs, to leading digital media successes today. The branding platform provides a means of leveraging the unique natural and cultural assets and stories of Niagara to promote the region to both residents and tourists.

Most importantly, Niagara communities have a story they can call their own – one that leverages their history and natural wonders but connects them to authentic new dimensions of future growth.

Since the inception of the Niagara Originals strategy more than 70 different business and community sectors and interests have adopted the visual identity⁶.

The Power of Stories

Mapping intangible cultural assets and stories is a powerful way to engage the community in important and powerful conversations about Lambton's unique identity and sense of place. Stories have been called the "DNA of culture" and are integral to cultural mapping. Experience demonstrates that mapping intangibles is most effective when it solicits

⁶ Niagara Originals <http://www.niagaraoriginal.com>

three kinds of stories:

- Stories that honour the past;
- Stories that celebrate the present;
- Stories that envision the future.

Several municipalities in Ontario over the past several years have launched project mapping intangible cultural assets and stories. Wider community engagement in storytelling is 'seeded' with the development of sample stories that celebrate positive stories of creativity and community commitment that help build a stronger and more positive narrative about the identity of that place. In several communities these stories have then been made available using searchable, GIS-based maps.

Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 6:

- 6.1 Review the County logo and determine if it represents a contemporary, attractive design; if it is to be updated, develop a community-based consultation process.
- 6.2 Review the County's communications programs, recognizing that use of traditional media is shifting and municipalities need to consider all contemporary communications tools to appeal to local residents, especially the under-30 generation.
- 6.3 Request the newly-formed County Cultural Committee to undertake a review of the County's identity and develop new branding opportunities. For example, the term "Chemical Valley" is considered by many to suggest a negative association in today's society; instead, green technologies and bio-energy presents a bright new opportunity. Any new image/brand should reflect changing demographics and the emerging creative economy.
- 6.4 Consider launching an on-going community story-telling initiative, perhaps kicked-off with a public story-telling event.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 7:

Coordination And Collaboration In The Cultural Sector

Stronger Collaboration

Heritage Sarnia-Lambton was one of the first heritage networks in the province, and the County is widely recognized for its leadership in establishing this mechanism for networking and collaboration.

However, coordination and collaboration in the arts community in the County is not strong and suffers from fragmentation and a lack of a common voice or mechanisms to support collaboration.

There is discussion about the possible revival of the Sarnia-Lambton Arts Council, but also suggestions that a new coordinating body representing a broader cross-section of cultural groups and activities should be examined.

One potential vehicle is a Lambton County Cultural Council (or Cultural Alliance) that could bring together a broad cross-section of arts and heritage groups, libraries, and cultural enterprises to identify shared interests and concerns and serve as a common voice and advocacy body for cultural development in Lambton County.

This direction cannot be imposed by County Council, and if it is to happen, it should evolve from within the arts community. The County Council can be supportive, perhaps even assign certain tasks or functions to a new body and provide some financial support, but the initiative must come from the grassroots.

There was considerable support for establishing a web-based portal and map system that will provide a coordinated 'one-stop' place where cultural groups as well as residents and visitors could access information on the range of local cultural groups, activities and events. It was also pointed to as an important tool and strategy to support

stronger coordination and collaboration across the board for local arts groups and supporters.

Organizational Capacity and Sustainability

Lambton has a vibrant and diverse cultural sector. However, as in most communities the vitality of individual organizations and the sector as a whole is challenged by instability stemming from issues of leadership capacity and continuity, and shortages in both human and financial resources.

Organizations and groups frequently find themselves competing against each other for support, exhausting their own resources and sometimes missing opportunities to collaborate.

Many individual artists, cultural workers and cultural organizations have similar needs in terms of professional and organizational sustainability. Strategies to address these challenges can include: support for networking and knowledge sharing; leadership and skill development; coordinated marketing and communications; collaborative use of space and equipment, among others.

Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 7:

- 7.1 Encourage the establishment of a County of Lambton Cultural Council or Alliance as a networking and capacity building vehicle.
- 7.2 Develop the new web portals, as identified earlier in this report.
- 7.3 Develop a County-wide volunteer database.
- 7.3 Review and expand the county and the city's grants to local arts groups, creators and heritage organizations, perhaps through new annual Mayor's and/or Warden's Awards.
- 7.4 Display and acknowledge local creations at each Council meeting.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 8:

Cultural Spaces And Facilities

The County of Lambton has an extraordinary network of cultural facilities across the County with its 30 libraries and heritage spaces.

There are also many spaces in other cultural facilities, in community centres and in commercial business settings, among others. All of these are potential venues for cultural activities.

A better inventory of these spaces is needed and the potential for a more coordinated and strategic approach to the programming and use of these spaces has emerged from consultations as an important step and priority for the cultural plan.

Leading Research on Trends in Cultural Facilities

A national study of cultural infrastructure undertaken by the Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communications at Simon Fraser University identified a growing trend across Canada toward developing facilities designed to leverage the benefits of collaboration and co-location in providing artists and creative practitioners with opportunities for knowledge sharing, networking, sharing of skills and resources, continuing professional development, and social and mutual support. According to the report these include:

- Multi-use hubs that integrate arts, culture, heritage, and library facilities to share resources and operation costs, and to develop strategic partnerships
- Cultural or creative incubators that offer platforms of support for creators and enable connection, production and networking among creators and with the public
- Artist live/work space or studio complexes that focus on live/work studios, artists living spaces, and a variety of space uses including rehearsal spaces, retail and cafes
- Integrated community projects that include cultural, environmental and social uses

- Multi-sector convergence centres that are designed to maximize socialization, networking and ‘random collisions’ and thus become major connecting hubs and economic engines in communities.

In terms of progressive thinking and planning for cultural facilities, insights can also be gained from the cultural facilities plan completed by the City of Vancouver in 2008⁷. The study argued that in a complex and economically challenging municipal environment, the role of municipalities in cultural facility provision must broaden from one of direct funding or program delivery to a broader set of responsibilities that includes:

- *Provider* – as the major funder and service provider;
- *Facilitator* – as an internal enabling role through planning, service delivery, capacity building or resource development;
- *Partner* – as a partner with the creative sector, other levels of government, post-secondary or educational agencies, etc. in the development and delivery of facilities and programs

The Vancouver Plan further states that cultural spaces and facilities must be understood not as stand-alone facilities but part of a larger cultural ecology in the community: an interrelated system of facilities and activity with specific relationships to neighborhoods, districts and larger regions. It also notes that cultural facilities cannot only be thought of as physical infrastructure but as places where new digital technologies support artists and creators.

⁷vancouver.ca/commsvcs/culturalservices/CulturalFacilities.pdf

In the United Kingdom discussions related to cultural facilities are increasingly framed in terms of both *'bricks and clicks.'* That is, cultural programming mandates and service delivery move beyond conventional buildings to technological platforms.

For Lambton County, this new way of thinking offers intriguing possibilities—multi-use facilities, combining living space with ground-level retail or studio businesses, combined public-use buildings, and so on. The Thedford Legacy centre offers a very progressive model for the future.

Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 8:

- 8.1 Develop a comprehensive inventory of public spaces suited for cultural programs, in each municipality.
- 8.2 Use the inventory as the basis for developing a Lambton Cultural Facilities Strategy to fully leverage its strong existing network of libraries and heritage facilities, and additional spaces identified through the spaces inventory.
- 8.3 Consider renewal of the Sarnia Library as the major 2014 centenary project for the City of Sarnia. A refurbished and rejuvenated downtown Library would provide an outstanding punctuation mark for the south end of Christina Street after the new Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery opens.



Photos by Darlene Coke

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 9:

Natural And Cultural Heritage



County Leadership

The County of Lambton's provincially-recognized leadership in heritage programming and networking was described earlier in this report. Heritage Sarnia-Lambton was one of the earliest heritage networks in the province that recognized the needs and opportunities connected with closer collaboration and communication across a range of heritage groups and activities. Award winning projects such as the The Ontario Visual Heritage DVD project "Sarnia Lambton: Just Passing Through speaks to leadership in the area of heritage programming and interpretation.

Oil Heritage Conservation District

One of the most significant recent achievements was the successful designation of the *Oil Heritage Conservation District* as the first industrial heritage district to be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The designation was informed and supported by the *Oil Heritage Conservation District Management Plan* intended to guide the protection and conservation of the unique heritage attributes and character of the area as identified in the Heritage District Study. The goal of the Heritage Conservation District Study was to identify and describe the resources, rank their importance, and to provide guidance for the future to ensure their conservation.

Objectives include protecting and conserving the significant heritage resources in order to ensure that future generations have continued access to the operations of this unique heritage site, enjoy it as a continuing and evolving cultural landscape, as well as documenting and noting historical activities that contributed to the development of the oilfield. Work is well underway in the development of a proposal to have the District designated a World Heritage Site, which would hold tremendous potential for cultural tourism to Lambton and southwestern Ontario generally.

Lambton County Natural Heritage Study

With regard to natural heritage, the County of Lambton and the City of Sarnia have recognized the need to develop a solid information and policy basis for the area's woodland and other natural features in order to fulfill their planning obligations under the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

Project goals include developing land-use planning information and policy that identifies, protects and enhances Lambton's natural heritage features and systems, as well as encouraging and facilitating private stewardship and public education. Whether in the context of the study itself or through parallel efforts in cultural mapping, there is an opportunity to build a stronger base of information on cultural heritage resources and features and to adopt a 'whole systems' vision of natural and cultural heritage consistent with provincial heritage policy frameworks.

Recommended Actions for Strategic Direction 9:

- 9.1 Establish a county-wide Heritage Advisory Committee to coordinate heritage activities, education and awareness.
- 9.2 Examine opportunities for building on the strengths of Heritage Sarnia-Lambton as a networking and capacity-building mechanism to support stronger connections across the entirety of the cultural sector (potentially through the formation of the aforementioned Cultural Alliance).

CONCLUSIONS:

This Cultural Plan offers specific directions, ideas and a blueprint for action for Lambton County. This is the start, not the end, of the cultural planning process.

Adopting and supporting the recommendations moves the County Council forward in a very exciting direction. This document is the launch-pad for what will be more, new and better community ideas, concepts and projects, which is one of the things that makes the process and the implementation of this plan so exciting.

There is no doubt that the community is poised and ready for this next big step. From economic enhancements to local job development, from relating better to the needs of young people to supporting community creative initiatives, the Lambton County Cultural Plan is a strong, comprehensive and innovative plan.

Some new investments are recommended but we do not believe there are any financial impediments to proceeding. Opening up this new economic spire provides clear benefits for the County of Lambton and the City of Sarnia.

A modest investment of public dollars will pay significant benefits in the future. In fact, a recent study by the Martin Prosperity Institute for the City of Toronto's Economic Development committee showed that a capital investment of \$1 from the city leverages \$17.75 for cultural organizations there—in other words, there is significant public benefit and economic return.

Lambton County's cultural efforts need to create a larger umbrella that will better embrace arts organizations, heritage supporters, cultural endeavours, emerging leaders, Lambton College, the UWO Research Park, SLEP, TSL and other community partners. This will bring together the many economic and cultural spires that exist

throughout the county but are not well-connected, or too-infrequently partner together. The result will be a stronger, more diverse, more prosperous local economy and a community with more cultural vitality.

Municipalities operate in a fiercely competitive marketplace. Job creation is not the responsibility of a local Council—but creating and providing the kind of community in which jobs and opportunity will flourish and grow, and entrepreneurs and creative talent will want to live there, is most certainly a Council responsibility.

This plan will help to reposition, shape, build and develop Lambton County. It will not be a rapid process but it is a necessary one. It is also an important asset to help focus the direction and the future of the county.

By adopting this Cultural Plan, by authorizing staff and the new County Creative Committee to move forward, and by making the modest new investments proposed Lambton County strides ahead confidently and proudly, joining other leading municipalities in approving their cultural plans.

This is a significant step forward, and presents a new opportunity.

Lambton County has an exciting and prosperous future ahead.

APPENDICES

A: Steering Group Members

Name	Representing
Bev MacDougall	City of Sarnia and Lambton County Councillor, Lochiel Kiwanis Community Center ED
Gord Perry	Oil Springs Heritage Advisory Committee
Jill Campbell	Lambton Cultural Advisory Committee
Marshall Kern	Tourism Sarnia-Lambton. Board member
Garry McDonald	Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce
Cindy Scholten	Sarnia-Lambton Young Professionals
Marty Raaymakers	MIG Engineering, on Ec. Dev. Board
Caroline DiCocco	musician & Italian heritage author
Ruth Illman	Lambton Shores Council/ Communities in Bloom
Charles Fairbank	Fairbank Oil National Historic Site
Wendy Cornelis	Imperial Theatre Sarnia, Operations Manager
Stefanie Ferrera	Local Immigration Partnership Co-ordinator
Dympna Devoy	Lawrence House Centre for the Arts
RESOURCE STAFF	
Robert Tremain	General Manager, Cultural Services Division
Darryn Doull	Curatorial Assistant, Judith & Norman Alix Art Gallery
Susie Beynon	Libraries - Public Services Manager
Laurie Webb	Curator/Supervisor Museums
Dave Posliff	Manager, Planning & Development Services

The Steering Group and staff wish to extend their appreciation to the community leaders and citizens who so generously gave their time, experience and energy.

Appendix B:

In addition, we wish to thank the following for their special insights:

The following individuals were interviewed (in alphabetical order):

Steve Arnold, Warden, County of Lambton
 Bryan Boyle, Ministry of Agriculture Field Representative
 Mike Bradley, Mayor of the City of Sarnia
 Jim Burns, Past Warden of Lambton County
 Donna Cain, Immigration Counsellor
 Stefanie Ferrara, Project Coordinator, Local Immigration Partnership
 Charles Fisher, Revenue Development Officer, County of Lambton
 Mary Pat Gleeson, Councillor and heritage advocate, Town of Petrolia
 Tony Hanlon, President, Lambton College
 Jane Hunter, Co-Chair, Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery Fundraising Cabinet
 George Mallay, General Manager, Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership
 Bev MacDougall, City of Sarnia and Lambton County Councillor
 Brian Trothen, Lawrence House Centre for the Arts, board member
 Chris Williamson, Williamson Farms and Maple Syrup producer