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The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation is committed to promoting awareness and education about Ontario’s Greenbelt. To this end we occasionally publish research and general interest papers that explore our three program areas: viable agriculture and viticulture; vibrant rural communities; and, a restored and protected natural environment.

Local Leadership Matters: Ontario Municipalities Taking Action to Strengthen the Greenbelt
Prepared by Sean Hertel, MES, MCIP, RPP and Julia Markovich MPI, DPhil
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................. 5

Executive Summary .............................................................................................................................. 7

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 9
   1.1 About the Greenbelt and the Greenbelt Plan .......................................................... 9
   1.2 About this Research ......................................................................................................... 10

2 Municipalities Researched and Interviewed .......................................................................... 11
   2.1 Greenbelt Municipalities ................................................................................................. 11
   2.2 Who is Working to Advance the Greenbelt’s Goals? ........................................... 12

3 What Municipalities are Doing to Achieve the Greenbelt’s Goals .................................. 13
   3.1 Supporting Agriculture and Value-Added Activities .......................................... 13
   3.2 Natural Heritage Conservation and Land Securement ........................................... 18
   3.3 Tourism Promotion ........................................................................................................... 23
   3.4 Management and Expansion of Multi-Purpose Trail Networks ...................... 27
   3.5 Economic Development ................................................................................................ 28
   3.6 Sustainability Programs ............................................................................................... 35
   3.7 Education and Awareness Campaigns ..................................................................... 36
   3.8 Municipal Collaborations ............................................................................................... 37

4 Challenges, Opportunities, and Rationale for Municipal Initiatives .............................. 41
   4.1 Rationale for Municipal Initiatives ............................................................................... 41
   4.2 Challenges Being Encountered by Municipalities ................................................... 42
   4.3 Public Perceptions and Expectations ....................................................................... 43
   4.4 Important Factors for Achieving Greenbelt Objectives ........................................ 43
   4.5 Advice From Staff to Their Municipal Colleagues ................................................ 47

5 Summary ........................................................................................................................................... 49

6 Appendix 1: Municipal Initiatives Summary Table .............................................................. 52
The authors are very grateful to the 42 municipal staff who participated in interviews and generously gave of their time, stories and expertise. Outside of the interview process, several staff from different municipalities were extremely helpful in making introductions to key contacts, confirming information for case studies, and providing photos and other materials. Beyond municipalities considered in this report, Marlaine Koehler from Waterfront Regeneration Trust and Anne Freeman from the Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network were very helpful in their suggestions for interview candidates.

Grant McLean, a recent graduate of the Program in Planning at the University of Toronto, conducted valuable preliminary research.
Trails are very important. Almost all the time, when we ask what recreation facilities people want to see more of, trails are always at the top of their list.

Municipal parks staff
Executive Summary

Municipalities have an important role to play in supporting and advancing the goals of Ontario’s Greenbelt. The planning response by municipalities is largely through provincial policy conformance, by updating their Official Plans and related documents. This important first step is just one way in which municipalities are helping to achieve the objectives of the Greenbelt Plan.

Based on interviews with 42 staff from 30 municipalities located across the Greenbelt, this report describes what initiatives are being advanced to achieve the goals of the Greenbelt beyond land-use policy conformity, what partners are involved, challenges encountered, and insights for moving forward.

We found that these municipal initiatives fall into seven main areas:
- Support for agriculture and value-added activities
- Support for land stewardship and land securement
- Tourism promotion
- Management and expansion of multi-purpose trail networks
- Economic development
- Sustainability programs
- Education and awareness campaigns

Overall, we heard from staff that there is strong support from their municipal governments and the public for the programs they are undertaking which achieve the Greenbelt’s goals. It is worth noting that municipalities are not required to pursue many of the initiatives presented in this report. Asked to describe why the municipality was pursuing a particular program, for example, staff often replied, “It is the right thing to do.” There are, in fact, several motivations behind municipal initiatives including capitalising on economic and tourism opportunities, and responding to public expectations.

There are several challenges being encountered by municipal staff through their work. Most of those identified in this report are related to implementation (e.g. funding), while a small number are attributed to interpretation and perception of provincial policy. Staff made several suggestions to improve or enhance these initiatives with a view towards the larger goal of a protected, viable, and diverse Greenbelt, including actions from the Ontario government, municipalities themselves, and the public.
There are misconceptions about what the Greenbelt Plan allows or doesn’t allow you to do. A lot of the restrictions actually come from the municipalities, not the province. Some take a Draconian approach, and others less so.

Municipal economic development staff
1.1 About the Greenbelt and the Greenbelt Plan

Ontario’s Greenbelt is the largest in the world – permanently protecting almost two million acres of productive farmland, woodlands, wetlands, and other natural heritage features and connections. It contains the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and it links Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe in the north, Lake Ontario in the south, and the Finger Lakes of the Kawarthas in the east. Adding to its significance, the Greenbelt wraps around one of the largest urban areas in North America – the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), home to nearly nine million people (2011), and projected to grow to more than 11 million by 2031.

The Ontario government created the Greenbelt Plan in 2005, with the vision to establish a broad band of permanently protected land that:

- Protects against the loss and fragmentation of agriculture land and agricultural uses
- Protects natural heritage features and water resources vital for sustaining ecological and human health
- Provides for a diverse range of economic and social activities, including agriculture, tourism, recreation, and resource use

The Greenbelt Plan, enacted under Section 3 of the Greenbelt Act, sets out specific goals and policies to guide the use and stewardship of the land across the Greenbelt area. The Greenbelt Plan forms part of a comprehensive and ecologically-based approach to growth management in south central Ontario that includes the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and the Big Move Regional Transportation Plan.
1.2 About This Research

The purpose of this research is to understand what municipalities are doing above-and-beyond land use planning conformity with the Greenbelt Plan, to realize the vision of a protected, yet vibrant and productive, Greenbelt. While the Plan's policies are most directly implemented through municipal Official Plan policies and zoning by-laws, there are a variety of other ways municipalities can go beyond protecting the land base and contribute to achieving the broader goals of the Greenbelt, including initiatives that:

- Support the local farming and agri-food sector
- Enhance connectivity of natural heritage features or otherwise rehabilitate or enhance ecosystems, alone or in collaboration with adjacent municipalities and relevant conservation authorities
- Restore or otherwise improve the quality or quantity of ground and surface water, and/or the hydrological integrity of watersheds, in collaboration with Conservation Authorities
- Support land stewardship, in collaboration with agriculture organizations and Conservation Authorities
- Invest in, and improve, municipal transit infrastructure
- Diversify or otherwise enhance the economic viability of rural communities
- Make and strengthen city-countryside links
- Build awareness and understanding of the many benefits of natural and agricultural systems
- Support the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage resources
- Provide publicly accessible parkland, trails, or other open space areas

Based on interviews with 42 staff from 30 municipalities within the Greenbelt, this report captures a range of practices and perspectives in working to achieve the goals of the Greenbelt. In addition to understanding what is being undertaken, the report describes, from the perspective of municipal staff, the motivations behind them, who was involved, the challenges encountered, and suggestions for overcoming them.
Municipalities Researched and Interviewed

2.1 Greenbelt Municipalities

The Greenbelt area includes 64 municipalities that are incredibly diverse in geography, character, and size—threading together “cottage country”, rural hamlets, centres of agriculture production and processing, fast-growing new neighbourhoods surrounding historic cores, and some of the largest cities in Canada. An additional layer of complexity in this diverse landscape is that many municipalities have a unique combination of different settlement patterns within their boundaries, such as tract housing bordering productive farmland, historic hamlets in the protected countryside, and naturalized corridors extending through mature urban areas.

“Everyone’s circumstance is different. The Greenbelt goes across a huge swath of Southern Ontario.”

Municipal project manager

The research focuses on those municipalities with a substantial land mass within the Greenbelt, to capture a cross section of municipal feedback in terms of location, natural features, land area, population, built form, and types of initiatives. In so doing, we sought a sample of municipalities and staff disciplines that would not only reflect the Greenbelt’s diversity and complexity, but that would provide an account of the diversity of what is happening “on the ground.”
2.2 Who is Working to Advance the Greenbelt’s Goals?

The municipal staff interviewed for this project reflect a diverse range of roles and professional and educational backgrounds. Participants include front line staff, members of senior management and positions in between – including ecologists, economic development officers, engineers, foresters, land use planners, and tourism promoters. Many staff interviewed are from very large, interdisciplinary departments with a range of functions – including, most commonly, various aggregations of planning, development services, and economic development – while other participants are from smaller departments responsible for most core municipal services, and who perform a wide range of duties and interact with a number of different people.

Staff interviewed for this project frequently reported coordinating with other municipal staff outside their own departments, and many also indicated some degree of interaction with the public and grassroots organizations. Many participants also reported collaborating with other levels of government (most commonly provincial ministries, and either the region or local municipalities in the case of two-tier municipalities) and related agencies. Conservation Authorities were also frequently cited as important collaborators.

It is noteworthy that, when asked about their specific role, staff commonly noted from the outset that they do not see themselves as “working on the Greenbelt.” While many individuals agreed that their work does contribute to the Greenbelt’s goals in some way, it is usually only indirectly that they see their role as supporting the Greenbelt.
What Municipalities are Doing to Achieve the Greenbelt’s Goals

3.1 Supporting Agriculture and Value-Added Activities

Agriculture is a very active file for municipal staff, even in urban areas
Municipalities with a significant agricultural land base focus on sustaining and enhancing the economic, social, and ecological viability of the farming community. Many staff identified agriculture as their number one priority, and the most important industry – both economically and culturally – within the community. Urban municipalities also recognize agriculture and access to local food as being very important to their community and the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) as a whole, and have supportive programs in place.

“The Greenbelt is an important part of our regional structure...[It is] important that our region is recognized for its agricultural value... not just [as a] holding area for estate homes from [people from] Toronto.”

Municipal staff

Common initiatives to support agricultural activities include:
• Creating specific positions related to agriculture within planning and economic development departments
• Establishing and supporting active Agriculture Liaison or Advisory Committees
• Supporting farmers’ markets, with dedicated staff and facilities, and other direct and/or in-kind support
• Publishing and maintaining farm directories, and related maps, to connect residents to local food sources and farmers to processors
• Organizing farm tours for staff and councillors to better understand the operations and needs of their agricultural community
• Supporting and promoting value-added uses, including on-farm processing and/or sales
Agriculture, as described by municipal staff, is a way of life with generations of history within communities. It is a complex industry requiring specialized knowledge and expertise across its various sub-industries, including cash crops, tender fruit, and viniculture. It is an important part of several local economies, and the larger GGH region as a whole. Many staff, and especially those in agriculture-related roles, indicated that agriculture is largely misunderstood by the public and government decision-makers (especially by those outside of the close-knit farming community). This misunderstanding, it was thought, could potentially threaten or at least hinder active support to the long-term viability of agriculture as both an industry and occupation.

Case Study No. 1

**Town of Lincoln: “Centre of Excellence for Agriculture”**

The Town of Lincoln, through its newly-adopted Official Plan (OP), has positioned itself as a “Centre of Excellence for Agriculture”—recognizing the importance of agriculture as its major economic driver, its small town character, and the significance of being a Greenbelt community. Accordingly, the OP contains policies to ensure the primacy of agriculture and agricultural sustainability, its community identity, and the protection of the natural environment.

The more specific goals and policies of the Plan include:

- Supporting the production of locally grown foods
- Attracting a full range of business linked to, or supportive of, food and farming and all related activities
- Developing a “made in Lincoln” economic development strategy primarily based on agriculture, and including buy local initiatives
- Supporting land uses that allow farmers to broaden their operations to diversify economic activity, and add value to agricultural production

Its OP was adopted by the Town in July 2014, and is currently being reviewed by the Region of Niagara for approval. In the meantime, the Town has initiated work on its agriculture-based economic development strategy, which is expected to be complete by the end of 2015.

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Increasing the focus on “value-added” activities
Growing food is one aspect of farming, which in some cases does not provide sufficient income. Adding value to agricultural products through processing and packaging is seen by municipal staff as a way to improve the business and financial prospects of many within the community. Municipal initiatives to support value-added agriculture uses, often working with Agriculture Liaison Committees and/or Community Futures Development Corporations, include:

• Providing advice and training to farmers related to permits, regulations, and skills-training
• Amending Official Plans and zoning-by-laws to permit on-farm processing and retail uses as-of-right (up to a maximum size)
• Producing and maintaining specialized, sector-focused directories or databases to connect farmers with processors and retailers

Case Study No. 2

County of Northumberland: Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre

The Venture Centre is a 15,000 sq.ft. local food processing and training facility designed to assist local farmers diversify and expand their income streams, and develop and market new recipes and products. Opened in early 2015, the facility is located at 116 Industrial Park Road North in the municipally-owned Colborne Industrial Park, with direct exposure to Highway 401.

The Venture Centre will provide:

• Rental of cooking, chilling, flash freezing, packaging and labeling equipment to the agricultural/business community on a cost-recovery basis
• Cold storage capacity to accommodate both refrigerated and frozen items
• Designated space to accommodate a private niche market food producers
• Meeting and office space
• Technology access for e-commerce activities, and health and safety standards
• On-site support and expertise during production periods from food processing programs from various education institutions (e.g. Durham and Loyalist Colleges)

All products produced at the Centre will be certified for commercial use (e.g. distribution to grocery stores, restaurants).

The Venture Centre was a recommendation arising from the Regional Local Food BR+E (Business Retention and Expansion) Initiative, which includes the County of Northumberland and eight other municipalities.

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Initiatives led by municipalities to foster a better and broader understanding of the importance of agriculture within the larger community, include:

- Holding farm workshops for primary and secondary school students to promote healthy eating and career-path education in the industry, in partnership with the school boards, and often with support from Agricultural Liaison Committees
- Assisting farmers to market their farms and their products, through providing them with marketing training
- Producing a series of YouTube videos to promote farming, especially to a younger generation

**Supporting and understanding the agricultural sector**

Many municipalities are allocating dedicated staff and resources, often within economic development departments, to regularly liaise with and support their community’s farmers and agri-businesses. For the most part, this involves informal one-to-one meetings or through Agricultural Liaison Committee events. These farmer-staff interactions are usually focused on:

- Navigating and understanding the relevant policies and regulations regarding value-added activities (e.g. on-site processing and sales)
- Providing resources and/or workshops to assist in the preparation of Environmental Farm Plans, and other farm operation-related strategies
- Assisting in the preparation of grant applications, often related to business retention and expansion programs (BR+E)

“In terms of agri-business, we have taken a very liberal interpretation of our zoning by-law on home businesses with the view to expand and support agri-business.”

**Supporting the production of, and access to, local food**

“Eating local” has evolved to be an important value or principle for both consumers and producers. Municipalities are picking up on this change – supporting the availability of locally-produced food to achieve several policy objectives related to healthy communities, economic vitality, and sustainability. In working towards these goals, municipalities are working with a variety of groups including Health Units, Chambers of Commerce, Agriculture Liaison Committees, local food groups and a wide variety of local grass roots organizations. Initiatives being led or supported by municipalities to promote access to healthy and locally-produced food, include:

- Implementing changes to Official Plans and zoning by-laws to permit and encourage farmers’ markets and urban farming throughout the municipality
- Working with hospitals, municipal long term care facilities, and child care centres, often with support from the Greenbelt Fund, to provide locally-produced food to patients and visitors
- Supporting and promoting various Good Food Box programs, frequently administered by Health Units, to provide healthy food at an affordable price for residents, and which also can include providing farmers’ market vouchers to low income residents
3.2 Natural Heritage Conservation and Land Securement

A system-wide approach to natural heritage conservation

Despite the vast size and reach of the Greenbelt municipal staff most often view it as one component of their municipality’s natural heritage system. Staff – most often environmental planners, foresters, and project managers – give the same high level of attention to natural heritage features whether within or outside of the Greenbelt.

Case Study No. 3

Region of Peel: Greenlands Securement Program

The Region of Peel’s Greenlands Securement Program is a funding support program to assist specific conservation partners (Conservation Authorities, Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and the Bruce Trail Conservancy) in securing natural spaces for environmental and recreational benefits. The Program generally funds up to 50 per cent of an acquisition or securement. The Region also works with other partners to bring forward applications for funding support, conducts landowner outreach initiatives, and delivers educational workshops.

The Program came about as a result of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. A joint report prepared by York, Durham and Peel, entitled: “The Oak Ridges Moraine: Proposals for the Protection and Management of a Unique Landscape (2001),” generated recommended actions around the Moraine. Two key recommendations were, that: 1) the Province establish a securement fund across the Moraine, and; 2) each of the three Regions establish a securement fund for lands both on and off the Moraine. As a result of that report, the Region initiated a program to cover all of Peel (not just the Oak Ridges Moraine).

Peel’s program is different from other securement initiatives in the GTHA, in that it doesn’t own public lands for natural greenlands purposes, nor does it run stewardship programs. The Region’s primary role is to implement the program and work with partners to bring forward potential securement projects to Council and the Council sub-committee for funding support approvals.

The Region has secured 17 properties to date, through a combination of acquisitions and conservation easements. Over the lifetime of the program (since the first allocation in 2005), $6 million has been budgeted for securement.

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Municipalities lead and collaborate on many initiatives to maintain and enhance their natural heritage resources

Through a combination of resource availability (e.g. staff and funding) and jurisdictional responsibilities, municipal roles and work on the natural heritage file can vary greatly. Most often, municipalities simultaneously lead and support others (e.g. Conservation Authorities, non-governmental organizations) on a range of initiatives, including:

- Administering tree planting programs, both on public and private lands
- Purchasing lands (i.e. land securement), most often properties bordering another municipality, to expand existing publicly- and privately-owned wetlands and woodlands
- Preparing management plans and agreements for publicly-owned lands, often in collaboration with other agencies, to improve public access and the health of natural heritage systems (e.g. Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System)
- Enacting and enforcing tree protection/natural features by-laws (mostly in larger, more urban municipalities)

A big part of our delivery is healthy trees and healthy communities. The ‘healthy people piece’ is integral to the protection of the natural environment.

Municipal forestry staff
A majority of the natural features within the Greenbelt are privately owned

Several municipal staff said that it is important to realize that many of the woodlots and wetlands, for example, are privately-owned and often on active farms. This presents both a challenge and opportunity for municipal programs related to the stewardship of the natural environment. Generally, the upper-tier municipalities are leading or supporting initiatives tailored to farmers and large residential estate owners, including:

- Providing information kits to explain sustainable land stewardship practices, often in concert with Conservation Authorities
- Creating awareness of invasive plant and animal species, to prevent the loss of native habitats and forest cover
- Exploring the use of programs such as Alternative Land Use Service (ALUS) to recognize and support farmers for the land stewardship services they provide on their lands
Case Study No. 5

Town of Aurora: The Economic Value of Natural Capital Assets Report

The Economic Value of Natural Capital Assets report, first completed by the Town in 2013, builds the case for the protection of natural capital assets from an economic prospective. The report concludes that the total economic value of Aurora’s natural assets is estimated at approximately $7.4 million annually.

By determining the land area of natural features such as woodlands and wetlands using GIS, and then multiplying that area by a baseline valuation per hectare, the Town created a dynamic tool to inventory and value its natural assets.

The report, which will be updated in the future, is intended primarily as an education tool for residents and developers. Changes to the Town’s Official Plan will be made to require the submission of a financial analysis, using the Town’s calculations, to assess the cost of a potential impact on natural assets in a given area.

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“Council wanted to protect lands containing natural capital assets from development but didn’t have the full economic equation in front of them.”

Municipal Staff
3.3 Tourism Promotion

Tourism initiatives bring together and support many other Greenbelt-related programs

While tourism is a specialized field, it frequently brings together other programs and disciplines with the effect of achieving far more than visits and receipts. Our research has revealed that tourism intersects with many other Greenbelt-related initiatives and goals, including support for agriculture viability, economic development, and the improvement or expansion of trails.

Municipal tourism initiatives generally involve a combination of three major initiatives:

- Organizing and promoting various seasonal farm trails (e.g. Pumpkin Pie Trail in York Region), often in collaboration with agriculture sector groups and chambers of commerce
- Partnering with community and agricultural organizations to promote farm-related festivals including Fall Fairs and music festivals (e.g. Greenbelt Harvest Picnic in Hamilton)
- Publishing maps and brochures (paper and on-line), often in collaboration with the related Regional Tourism Organization (RTO)

The Greenbelt is a major attraction

Smaller municipalities with a large proportion of Greenbelt area tend to rely more heavily on expanding tourism to support their local economies. In combination with relatively small non-residential tax bases, and smaller populations, tourism is viewed as an important lever for capitalizing on the economic and cultural potential of natural assets. While the Greenbelt was rarely mentioned by name in the interviews with tourism staff, and rarely referred to by name in tourism brochures, it contains many of the very assets being promoted through tourism programs. These include farmers’ markets, locally-produced food (e.g. wine or baked goods), hiking and cycling trails, and natural attractions.

“The Greenbelt dovetailed with our objectives.”

Municipal tourism staff
We’ve marketed ourselves as a Greenbelt community.

Municipal staff
Case Study No. 6

**Bruce County: Explore the Bruce Adventure Passport**

Bruce County’s Explore the Bruce Adventure Passport program is an annual, themed scavenger hunt that gets residents and cottagers alike out into the many natural features and other attractions across the County. Many of the hidden sites – you need to follow the clues along the way – are located within the Niagara Escarpment, which forms the northwestern spine part of the Greenbelt.

There are 12 sites in all, scattered across all corners in the County, and some are only accessible by water. To participate, residents and visitors get a contest card and the latest Bruce County map, and then head out at their own pace to find at least seven of the 12 destinations, following clues with the aid of a GPS unit (those needing a GPS unit can borrow one from a Bruce County Library). Once a location is found, a sign post with a special hole punch allows the participant to punch the corresponding location on their Passport to prove they found it. Passports with a minimum seven punches to be eligible for prize draws.

The Adventure Passport event will have its 11th running in 2015, usually between the months of May and October.

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**The best way to the heart (of the Greenbelt) is through the stomach**

Popular and emerging tourism strategies are oriented to the public’s growing concern for the quality and origin of food. Municipal staff specified the importance of building tourism strategies around farm-related attractions such as seasonal festivals and corn mazes (“agri-tourism” and “agri-tainment”), and food-related events and restaurants serving local food (“culinary tourism”). Not only do these approaches meet a growing demand in the tourism market, staff noted that they tap into a growing public expectation for organic and sustainably-sourced food, as well as authentic experiences.

“People are concerned about where their food comes from, and how far away it comes.”

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Municipal economic development staff
We have this wonderland landscape – the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Greenbelt – and the rolling hills…and we thought, ‘what if we created a culture of cycling?’

Municipal tourism staff
Offering a fresh, unique experience for new Canadians
While strong population growth in the Toronto region's urban area is driving much of the tourism in the surrounding rural areas, it is the ethnic and cultural diversity of that population that has some tourism staff especially captivated. A largely un-tapped tourism market is providing nature-related experiences for immigrants from countries where they may not have had the same access to nature. Though no specific strategies have been developed by municipalities for this unique – and potentially very lucrative – market, tourism staff nonetheless recognize this market as an important consideration.

3.4 Management and Expansion of Multi-purpose Trail Networks

Trails as pathways to a range of municipal goals
Trails within and connecting across communities take many forms and are used by a broad spectrum of people in different ways – for leisure and recreation, exercise, and even commuting. But trails are proving to be more than facilities for safe and enjoyable hiking, running, cycling, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and horseback riding. Interviews revealed that municipalities are pursuing trails as a means to achieve a number of cultural, economic, environmental, and health objectives. Accordingly, staff from a range of disciplines – transportation, forestry, planning, tourism, economic development – are becoming increasingly focused on the promotion and expansion of trails within their municipalities.

Connecting to the Greenbelt system neighbours
The 475 km Greenbelt Route for cyclists and the larger Waterfront Trail along Lake Ontario are serving as important ‘spines’ for municipal trail systems – forging new connections into the heart of the Greenbelt, and linkages to neighbouring communities. In the spirit of leveraging the benefits of inter-regional connectivity, York Region and the City of Toronto are in the process of implementing the 121 km Lake-to-Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail – connecting Lake Simcoe with Lake Ontario, and linking with the Greenbelt and Waterfront Trails. In our interviews, municipal staff involved in the planning and implementation of trails spoke of the benefits that cross-boundary connections would bring, including the opportunity to provide additional connectivity (i.e. access to Greenbelt) for residents and tourism potential (i.e. attracting large touring groups and special events).

Local trail networks
On a smaller, intra-regional scale, municipalities are planning, building, and maintaining their trail networks (comprising on- and off-road facilities, and mostly hard-surfaced in more urbanized areas) for the recreational use and enjoyment of their residents. There is an emerging trend, however, to build and promote cycling networks for commuting, and to also use trails as a way to attract residents seeking healthy and active lifestyles. Recognizing the community and economic development potential of trails, especially in proximity to the countryside, the Township of Uxbridge recently branded itself and trademarked the term as “The Trail Capital of Canada.” Generally, municipal initiatives related to trails include:

- Incorporating trails into the planning process for new communities, and as a condition of some development approvals (e.g. plan of subdivision), so that trails are available to residents when they move in
- Publishing (paper and on-line) trail and/or hiking guides and cycling maps
- Hosting bike clinics in the community to educate the public about bicycle safety and maintenance
- Ensuring that on- and off-road trails are clearly marked and signed, which often involves inter-departmental coordination within the municipality, and also coordination with external partners including Conservation Authorities (for some off-road trails), the upper- or lower-tier municipality, the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation
We had some visionaries in our Transportation Department. For example, they supported dedicated cycling lanes and lanes in the right-of-way (wide curb lanes, and multi-use paths, while working with locals for cost-sharing).

Municipal tourism staff

**Blazing a new trail**

Leveraging trails – for hiking, cycling, snowmobiling, and horseback riding – as major tourism draws (to support spin-offs, such as hotels and restaurants, was also noted as another area of potential tourism growth. However, staff noted this can be a challenge because trail-users generally have different expectations for attractions and activities, and nearby overnight accommodations are in small supply. Most often, trail users have to “stay in the next town over,” and their shopping and eating dollars follow them there. Limited parking for vehicles at trailheads was also noted as a challenge.

### 3.5 Economic Development

**Building on the healthy environment, healthy economic connection**

Interviews with municipal staff confirmed that pursuing economic development and environmental protection is not an either-or scenario. In fact, the Greenbelt Plan objectives are based on the health and interdependence of these two aims. Furthermore, the vibrancy of many municipalities depends greatly on the relationship between a healthy environment and a healthy economy.
The natural and rural environment can be an economic asset

The municipal staff interviewed, including economic development officers, stressed that, while the natural environment is one of their most important assets, economic benefits aren’t generated automatically. Additional initiatives, supported by clear goals and strategies, are required to capitalize on the natural attributes of a given municipality – be it Class 1 agricultural land, access to natural resources, or simply the quality of life that living in or near the countryside offers. Accordingly, municipal programs to support economic development, within the Greenbelt, generally focus on:

- Business retention and expansion (BR+E) initiatives, often in collaboration with Chambers of Commerce and Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs), and including various main street revitalization strategies
- Supporting and promoting value-added agricultural uses, including on-farm processing and sales, and also stand-alone food processing facilities
- Preparing and implementing specialized economic development strategies

Smaller, more rural municipalities are leveraging what they have

The economic development activities of more populated urban municipalities and less populated rural municipalities are very similar, but their specific strategies and tools are quite distinct. Perhaps the greatest difference is that smaller, more rural municipalities cannot capitalize on structural and sustained growth rates (of population and in economic output, including new construction) that are fixtures of strategies in larger, urban municipalities. Furthermore, economic development staff in these smaller municipalities have fewer resources – both within the municipal government (e.g. budgets, staff support) and the community at-large (e.g. private investment, organizations).
Case Study No. 7

City of Hamilton: Planning and Economic Development Specializations in the Rural and Agriculture Areas

Hamilton is one of Canada’s most populous cities, yet approximately 80 per cent of its land area is comprised of rural and productive agricultural land. Further, this historic post-industrial city is diversifying its economic base by supporting a burgeoning food processing sector. So, while the urban area is growing through infill development, achieving economic development through farming and value-added activities in the balance of the city – which includes the Greenbelt – requires a unique approach by city staff and property owners alike.

The City’s Planning and Economic Development Department has recently reorganized its Development Planning, Heritage and Design staff team from east and west areas to urban, suburban and rural areas. The change was made to allow staff to focus on, and become specialists in, the planning and economic development complexities unique to these areas – moving beyond geography. The staff teams also include natural heritage, cultural heritage, and urban design specialists to respond to the unique complexities. Information packages explaining the applicable planning and development requirements, including natural heritage considerations, are made available to the public and, more specifically, farmers and processors with operations in the Greenbelt.

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Constrained, but not limited
Our interviews revealed staff to be both realistic and optimistic about economic development prospects within their communities, and also excited about the possibilities presented by their municipalities’ more rural and natural character. This “grounded optimism” is attributed to opportunities in their communities for:
- Building on the unique main street areas of historic rural hamlets, which serve the surrounding agricultural community
- Capitalizing on the natural setting with its mix of tourism (e.g. bed and breakfasts, festivals) and lifestyle assets (e.g. trails, access to local food), all within a short drive of large urban centres
- Working with the close-knit and well-established agricultural community, often as an active and supportive partner
- Unlocking the economic potential of farming, which still has the opportunity to expand through offering new products for new markets

It’s difficult in this day and age to attract jobs to the rural area.

Municipal planning staff

There is value in value-adding
Many economic development programs to support and promote value-added agricultural uses have arisen as a result of business retention and expansion initiatives (BR+E). The act of value-adding means expanding and diversifying agricultural productivity through food processing, sales, new product development, and marketing. This is very much positioned as a “win-win” proposition, since farmers stand to benefit from increased revenues while the larger community is the recipient of more job opportunities, spin-off businesses and services, and tax revenue.

Working to overcome challenges
Staff indicated that their efforts are largely successful, but that they require a concerted and sustained effort to continue that success. Beyond external market forces such as prices and consumer demand, key challenges include sustained funding for BR+E, land use- and environmental-related regulations and approvals, and the limited time and other resources of small business owners to devote to exploring new opportunities. To address these challenges, municipal economic development staff are:
- Assisting small businesses, including farmers, to prepare grant applications for marketing and product development supports, among others
- Working to interpret and streamline, where possible, the various jurisdictional layers of policies, regulations and approvals applicable to business activities within their municipality
- Supporting entrepreneurship through various sector-based training seminars, networking events, and mentorship programs (e.g. “young entrepreneurs”)
We need to be creative in our economic development programs and fill our downtowns and employment lands.

Municipal economic development staff
Case Study No. 8

Durham Region: Vibrant North Durham Economic Plan

Vibrant North Durham is a five year (2013 - 2018) plan to implement economic development thinking, processes and projects in the Townships of Uxbridge, Scugog, and Brock. The Plan has four pillars:

- Be open for business
- Inspire and support entrepreneurs
- Create a vibrant future for young adults
- Build strong rural and small town identities

The Plan was adopted by the municipalities’ Councils in June 2013. While the Plan is a joint economic strategy for the northern three municipalities, each Township has created its own unique and prioritized action plan based on local assets and needs. In general, the Plan and the individual action plans focus on business retention and expansion (BR&E), including “main street” revitalization, community and business development initiatives.

Playing a coordination and resource role in the Plan’s development and implementation, Durham Region provides in-kind support to the “northern three.”

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We wanted to get our own house in order first, and lead by example.

Municipal planning staff
3.6 Sustainability Programs

Municipalities are becoming sustainable

“Sustainability” often means different things to different people. For the purpose of this research, it is a catch-all term to describe municipal work that perhaps does not fit neatly within a particular category, but that nonetheless support the cultural, economic, environmental, and social goals of the Greenbelt. Generally, municipalities have been acknowledging sustainability as an important community principle for at least a decade and more recently, have actively incorporated sustainability into their corporate cultures, policies, and operations. Generally, and especially in larger and more urban municipalities, sustainability initiatives include:

- Establishing sustainability offices, usually housed within the office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or within planning departments
- Adopting and monitoring, by municipal councils, of corporate sustainability strategies and energy plans (the latter now required under the provincial Green Energy Act)
- Retrofitting buildings and other capital assets (e.g. fleet vehicles) to more energy-efficient power sources
- Undertaking a variety of internal and public (e.g. schools, general community outreach) education and awareness programs, including the establishment of sustainability committees

Scaling-up sustainability initiatives

Through leading by example – including improving energy efficiency in municipal buildings – municipalities are now engaging with the community to improve sustainability on a larger scale. And they are not doing it alone. Through collaborating with a range of community groups, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), environmental groups such as the GTA Clean Air Council, and other municipalities, programs to advance sustainability throughout the community include:

- Developing policies and programs to promote active transportation (e.g. cycling) and walkable neighbourhoods
- Establishing sustainable development standards, applicable to some development applications, requiring the incorporation of a selected range of best practices beyond the Ontario Building Code, including green roofs, greywater recycling, and reduced on-site parking
- Implementing energy efficiency programs (e.g. retrofits), often with support from FCM’s Partners for Climate Change Protection Program
- Introducing programs for the planting of native plant species, including the establishment of pollinator habitats (for bees and butterflies), often in collaboration with Conservation Authorities
- Promoting awareness of the public health and environmental benefits of locally-produced food
3.7  Education and Awareness Campaigns

Communicating municipal initiatives
Many initiatives by municipalities to achieve the Greenbelt Plan’s goals usually include a significant education and awareness component to garner community understanding and support. So important is this component that municipalities invest a significant amount of time and resources in building a constituency around important issues, and especially those related to the sustainability of the natural environment, including the Greenbelt. While municipalities seldom name the Greenbelt specifically in their work, the Greenbelt nonetheless stands to benefit from municipal public education and awareness campaigns around broader issues. In general, and often in collaboration with Conservation Authorities and Public Health Units, these campaigns are focused on:

• Agriculture, to promote not only the benefits of locally-produced food and sustainable farming practices, but to promote farming to youth as a meaningful career (including agriculture-science related fields)
• Healthy communities, including the environmental and social benefits of compact, mixed use development and sustainable transportation options (e.g. transit, cycling)
• Where to buy local food, and the health, economic, and environmental benefits of eating locally
• Techniques for home gardening and urban farming, often in collaboration with Conservation Authorities
• Plant and animal species native to the community, so residents can appreciate and take action to protect them

Collaboration on communication
Education and awareness campaigns are rarely advanced by municipalities in isolation from one another. They are frequently joining a chorus of like-minded organizations to advance shared interests and goals. Generally, municipalities issue joint messages and maintain project websites with partners and/or collaborators on a project-by-project basis. Internally, municipal planning staff are most often the coordinators and spokespeople across departments – including serving as liaisons to Council and related committees – on environment-related initiatives. For example, planners often convene internal staff working groups on topics related to agriculture, sustainability, and local food. Interviews revealed that economic development staff are also becoming increasingly involved in “getting the word out”, both within and outside the municipal organization. The importance of champions for specific projects or issues – most often senior staff or a member of Council – was also identified as being central to developing programs, showing leadership, and gaining the trust of both staff and the public.

Municipalities’ audience
This comprises internal municipal staff, elected officials, and the public. Within this latter audience type, there are many targeted groups, including: farmers, businesses (investors, young entrepreneurs), tourists, and residents. These groups are reached through a variety of methods, including:

• Project websites, which may include community bulletin boards and forums
• Social media, including YouTube (e.g. one Agriculture Liaison Committee is making use of on-line videos to educate the public about farming)
• Festivals (e.g. various Fall Fairs), special events (e.g. Eastern GTA Eco Summit), and farmers’ markets
• Information booklets and other products to illustrate and explain the significance of native plant and animal species within their community

As municipalities this day and age, you can’t move forward without partners.

Municipal tourism staff
3.8 Municipal Collaborations

A range of relationships to meet a range of objectives

Very rarely is a municipality acting alone in pursuing an initiative that supports the Greenbelt’s goals. Interviews have revealed that municipal initiatives are usually pursued in collaboration, partnership or through funding relationships (and often a combination thereof) with at least one other body or group. Larger municipalities, especially upper-tiers, more often have the staff and funding resources (compared to lower-tier municipalities) to undertake an initiative on their own, but seldom do. This is, largely, owing to the cross-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary nature of the Greenbelt and the natural environment. It could also be attributed to the increasing level of public awareness of, and involvement in, issues related to the natural environment, such as the growing local food movement. The relationships that municipalities have with other groups can be generally described as:

- Collaborations with like-minded groups on issues of mutual interest; where the collaborators act independently, but in a coordinated way
- Partnerships, often with other levels of government and large non-government organizations, are often associated with legislated responsibilities (e.g. under the Green Energy Act)
- Funding arrangements (involving contributions from, and to, the municipality) usually through partnership agreements with other levels of government and large non-government organizations, on specific programs or events

Communities of collaborators, partners, and funders

Municipalities, through a combination of wide-ranging responsibilities and their geographies, are well-positioned to explore project opportunities with a diverse community of collaborators, partners, and funders (as well as prospective funding recipients). Interviews with staff revealed a large number and diverse range of bodies and groups that municipalities frequently work with.

When you start to work with people whose values align, those partnerships really continue indefinitely. These connections are critical. You never know where a connection will take you.

Municipal agriculture specialist
There's great value in just networking and connecting. When you start having discussions with other stakeholders you become aware of some commonalities. You can band together and bring attention to it, or bring resources together to make something happen.

Municipal agriculture specialist
Major funders of projects:
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
- Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
- Industry Canada, through various Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs)
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), through its RED (Rural Economic Development) program
- Various other Ontario government ministries including: Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure; Natural Resources; Transportation, and; Sport, Culture and Tourism

Promoting land stewardship and environmental sustainability:
- Conservation Authorities
- Durham Sustain Ability
- GTA Clean Air Council
- Junior Stewardship Rangers
- Nature Conservancy of Ontario
- Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust
- Ontario Nature (and local affiliates)
- Ontario Water Centre
- Partners for Climate Change Protection (led by FCM)
- Post-secondary institutions, including Durham College, University of Ontario Institute of Technology and University of Toronto – Scarborough
- Rouge Park Alliance
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust
- Public School Boards
- TreesCanada Foundation and TreesOntario

Flexible approaches on a project-by-project basis
The types of collaborations, partnerships, and funding approaches can vary greatly by project area. Further, a municipality can have different types of relationships with the same body or group, depending on the project. For example, a lower-tier municipality may jointly promote healthy communities with the upper-tier, and also make a financial or in-kind contribution on an energy-efficiency pilot project. This confirms a high degree of flexibility in the types of arrangements that municipalities have with other bodies or groups.

Promoting agriculture and access to local food:
- Agriculture Liaison Committees
- Federations of Agriculture
- Greenbelt Fund
- Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance
- Public Health Units
- Local food groups
- OMAFRA
- Post-secondary institutions, including Brock University, Niagara College, and Durham College.
- Various social service agencies, such as Feeding Halton

Promoting tourism, trails, and active transportation:
- Canadian Automobile Association (CAA)
- Friends of Seaton Trail
- Headwaters Horse Country
- Ontario by Bike!
- Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs)

Promoting economic development, including business expansion and retention (BR+E):
- Business Improvements Area (BIA) Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC)
- Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO)
Overall, the Region’s ‘sustainability approach’ is driving initiatives, and comes from increasing awareness of the urban-environment connection.

Municipal planning staff
Challenges, Opportunities, and Rationale for Municipal Initiatives

4.1 Rationale for Municipal Initiatives

A number of motivations and influences
Municipal staff highlighted a number of motivating factors behind programs supporting the goals of the Greenbelt, including:

- Promoting public health, including healthy and active lifestyles
- Supporting the rural nature of the municipality
- Responding to changing consumer tastes (e.g. demand for local, healthy and sustainably-sourced foods)
- Promoting the importance of agriculture and value-added activities to the local and regional economy
- Facilitating economic development and tourism promotion
- Leveraging natural assets (e.g. countryside, recreation opportunities, etc.) in municipal branding and promotion to retain and attract new residents and businesses
- Ensuring consistency with municipal corporate strategies, and more specifically with energy and sustainability plans

The Plan connection
It is interesting to note that, when asked to reflect on why their municipality was undertaking a particular initiative supporting the goals of the Greenbelt, many municipal staff emphasized that they were not acting specifically for the purpose of implementing the Greenbelt Plan or that their initiative pre-dates the establishment of the Greenbelt.
4.2 Challenges Being Encountered by Municipalities

The usual suspects: funding and staff resources
Most municipal staff we interviewed identified funding and staff resources as the number one challenge in pursuing their projects. This is especially the case in smaller, more rural municipalities. In fact, some staff from these municipalities expressed concern that one or more of their projects could soon be cancelled due to a lack of funding and that their municipality would likely be unable to continue a program once external funding sources expired. Often, staff mentioned that they currently did not have the time or resources required to actively pursue new funding grants or partnerships. Compounding this challenge is that funding is also an issue with many of the community organizations that collaborate with municipalities. Overall, municipalities appear to be increasingly reliant on funding and in-kind support from “the level above”: upper-tier funding from the government of Ontario as well as large non-government organizations, and lower-tier funding from the Region or County.

Broader challenges do not include political support
Overall, staff are very optimistic about support (both from within and outside the municipal administration) for Greenbelt-related initiatives, despite some obvious funding and staff resource challenges. With very few exceptions, staff noted that support from senior staff and elected officials is very strong, and therefore not seen as a challenge. Thinking beyond constrained resources, staff offered the following as other challenges in their work:

- The lack of capacity in some community partner groups, attributed to their volunteer-base and lack of technical expertise
- Broadening public awareness and buy-in beyond more established and older residents to gain the attention of newer and younger residents
- Managing expectations for immediate results, given that many municipal initiatives take time (e.g. increasing forest cover, economic development)

Funding is always an issue. We are always trying to stretch our dollars as much as possible.

Municipal tourism staff
4.3 Public Perceptions and Expectations

A supportive and action-seeking public
The public feedback received by staff on their municipalities’ initiatives was most often described as “very positive.” Many staff mentioned that members of the public do not generally associate their initiatives as being related to the Greenbelt. Staff also expressed that the public has come to expect this level of action as the “new normal,” given the large number of environment- and growth-related policies and programs rolled-out by the Ontario government and municipalities over the past decade. While staff indicated that this was generally a positive outcome, they recognise that the public is now looking for clear indications of progress. This places additional pressure on the part of the province and municipalities to implement their plans and deliver tangible results.

4.4 Important Factors for Achieving Greenbelt Objectives

Leadership, support, and education
Staff pointed to continued leadership and support, especially from the province, as being essential for achieving the goals and long-term viability of the Greenbelt. Staff confirmed that achieving the Greenbelt’s objectives is very much a shared responsibility, involving all levels of government and related agencies, non-government organizations, and the public at-large. According to staff, specific examples of what is required include:

- A more hands-on role by the province to assist municipalities, farmers and businesses in clarifying and interpreting the specific requirements related to the Greenbelt Plan and other provincial policies and regulations
- Sustained education and awareness to convey how the Greenbelt is relevant to people in everyday life
- Political and municipal staff champions to step forward

“We have a pretty engaged community. Approximately two-thirds of our community is “greenbelted,” so people are aware and are supportive.”

Municipal tourism staff
[It] comes down to political will and an understanding at the level of the importance of the Greenbelt Plan, and what it's been able to accomplish so far. Municipalities would not have the backbone to protect the lands under an ecological-based approach like in provincial plans.
More flexibility and balance required
A very strong message heard from staff was the need for flexibility and balance, especially when it comes to business- and tourism-related activities in the Greenbelt. While staff acknowledged that a diverse range of activities are permitted in the Greenbelt, some felt the prospect of environmental protection and economic activity has become a mutually-exclusive endeavour. Asked to elaborate, some recounted experiences where business operators felt push-back (from inside and outside the municipality) on plans to expand and diversify. This, in part, was attributed to a tendency by some municipalities to regulate some uses beyond the policies of the Greenbelt Plan.

Supporting farmers
Some staff interviewed expressed very strong views that supporting and protecting the prime farmland in the Greenbelt is fruitless without supporting and protecting the farmers. Many staff indicated that farmers need to be more actively supported and engaged. This includes for members of the public to better understand and respect the role of farmers in the economy and in the stewardship of the natural environment. By way of example, trespassing onto farm properties for hiking or sight-seeing is a growing issue that also has public safety implications. Asked how farmers can be better supported, staff recommended:

- A personal and patient approach in engaging farmers – some staff recounted how it was difficult at first to gain farmers’ trust
- Proactivity in addressing land use conflicts between agriculture and other activities
- Addressing the issue of trespassing on privately-owned farmland, from a respect and safety perspective

One of the biggest things is trying to be as flexible as you can in your zoning to allow some of these uses (e.g. value-added, tourism) as-of-right.

Municipal staff
A lot of issues are the same but are dealt with differently. Share those stories and examples so we can learn from them.

Municipal economic development staff
4.5 Advice from Staff to Their Municipal Colleagues

The role of partnerships
A common thread throughout our staff interviews was the importance of partnerships between the municipalities and organizations with shared goals. Many staff considered working with others as one of the greatest factors for success. They expressed a strong desire to work with and learn from municipalities beyond their jurisdictions.

Understanding the community
The ability to connect municipal programs with the needs of the public comes down to developing a broad and deep understanding of what, and for whom, those programs are intended. Staff frequently stressed the importance of learning from the communities they serve. They recognize that the best approaches to issues are often found within their communities, through listening to a variety of different voices.

Making sure policies are up-to-date and supportive
Many staff stressed the importance of having policies that align with programs and vice versa. Their advice to others was to establish strong and clear policies to empower staff to do what is required to achieve what is important in their communities.

Being open-minded and flexible
Many staff acknowledged the importance of being open-minded and listening to new ideas. The same flexibility desired by staff in accommodating economic and tourism activities on the Greenbelt, for example, also appears to be expected of each other.

You need to come at policy from an implementation perspective. You need to understand the outcome you want and then write the policy around that.

Municipal environmental planner
Be open to your community, and proactively encourage ongoing dialogue. Don’t say ‘no’ right off the bat because it’s off strategy. Sometimes the best thing to do is to make a new strategy. It’s not often in our office that we say ‘no’ to people. Sometimes that little ‘yes’ can do amazing things.

Municipal planning staff
Summary

Plan conformity is just the beginning
Interviews with staff confirmed that municipalities are key to the implementation of the Greenbelt Plan, working collaboratively across levels of government and a spectrum of community stakeholders. The alignment of municipal Official Plans and by-laws with provincial policy, including the Greenbelt and Growth Plans, is just the starting point for municipal action.

Doing the heavy lifting
Municipalities are leading and supporting a large number and wide variety of initiatives to achieve environmental protection, productive agriculture, and economic vitality within the Greenbelt. Our interviews identified more than 100 specific initiatives from 30 municipalities. And it is important to note that, except for a few programs, these programs are being pursued by municipalities on their own initiative for a variety of reasons, including responding to public expectations.

Encountering and responding to challenges
While municipal staff reported a generally strong base of support both within and outside municipal government for their work achieving the goals of the Greenbelt Plan, there are several challenges being encountered. Asked how these challenges could be overcome, staff pointed to:
• Increased and sustainable funding sources for current programs, and resources, largely staff, to explore new initiatives
• More flexibility and adaptability, overall, within policies and programs with the aim to achieve more immediate results (e.g. responding to market trends, challenges encountered by farmers)
• Empowering like-minded community organizations, through technical expertise and in-kind resources, to enhance their impact and membership
Many people don’t even want to interpret the policies, because they just assume you can’t do anything in the Greenbelt. But this isn’t the case.

Municipal economic development staff
Success and community impact
This research, based on interviews with municipal staff, indicates that municipal initiatives are achieving their stated objectives. Municipal policies and programs are aligned with, and supportive of, the goals of the Greenbelt. Furthermore, municipalities’ initiatives are having a noticeable impact within and across communities – building connections and capacity for action; improving education and awareness, and; working to improve opportunities for business, recreation and healthy living. The initiatives by municipalities are contributing to:

• Supporting and enhancing the viability of agriculture, by working with farmers to expand and diversify their operations
• Protecting and enhancing the natural landscape, through sustainable land stewardship and education
• Improving community-building practices, through “green” development projects and public awareness campaigns
• Supporting and enhancing economic development, through marketing tourism assets and working closely with business operators
• Building capacity within the community to protect and enhance, and to capture the benefits of, their natural assets

Continuing to support the Greenbelt’s objectives
Municipalities are critical when it comes to achieving a successful Greenbelt: where the natural environment is protected; where agriculture is viable and productive; and where there is a diverse range of business, recreational, and tourism opportunities. Municipal programs have been successful, and do require some additional support from a wide constituency to ensure continued positive impact in the pursuit of shared objectives.

I love asset-based community development as a strategy. You have a lot of resources in your community already.

Municipal economic development staff
Appendix 1: Municipal Initiatives Summary Table

Below is a listing of a range of municipal initiatives which achieve the goals of the Greenbelt from the interviews conducted as part of this study. The list is not comprehensive but offers a sampling of initiatives from across the Greenbelt.

**Agriculture**

Bruce County  
Bruce County Local Food Charter  
Durham  
Clarington barn restoration activities  
Clarington Clean Water Healthy Land Program  
Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee  
Durham Farm Connections  
Durham Farm Fresh  
Pickering Farmers’ Market  
Farmers of Uxbridge (annual event)  
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Working Group  
Uxbridge Horse-Lovers Tour  
Grey County  
Grey Bruce Culinary Association Local Food Map  
Grey County Chef’s Forum  
Halton  
Halton Annual Agricultural Forum  
Halton Healthy Community Fund  
Feeding Halton  
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Working Group  
Halton Agriculture Community Development Fund  
Hamilton  
Greenbelt Harvest Picnic
Hamilton Farm Map and Directory
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Working Group
Kawartha Lakes
Kawartha Choice (.com) Farm Fresh
Niagara
Niagara Agri-Food Strategy
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Working Group
Lincoln Official Plan - Centre of Excellence in Agriculture
Northumberland County
Northumberland “Good Food Box” Program
Northumberland County Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre
Regional Local Food Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Initiative
Peel
Caledon Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 237, Agriculture-Related Uses
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Working Group
York
Agricultural Advisory Committee of Council
Whitchurch-Stouffville Farm Fresh Program
Georgina Community Food Pantry
Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance Working Group
York Region Agri-Business Tour

Natural Heritage Conservation and Land Securement

Durham
Greenwood Conservation Area
Pickering Perennial Garden Project
Oshawa Purple Woods Conservation Area
Pickering Tree Planting Program
Clarington Trees for Rural Roads
Grey County
Grey County Forest Stewardship Council Certification
Halton
Greenlands Securement
Regional Forest Lands
Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System
Peel
Peel Greenlands Securement
Toronto
River Valley Connections
Rouge Park
York
Aurora Urban Forest Study (2013)
Aurora Economic Value of Natural Capital Assets Report
Richmond Hill Junior Stewardship Rangers partnership
York Greening Strategy
Richmond Hill Healthy Yards Program
Richmond Hill Land acquisition
Markham Natural Heritage Interface Guidelines
Vaughan Natural Heritage Network Study
Markham Natural Heritage Restoration Program
Georgina Ontario Water Centre
Markham Rouge Park planning
Richmond Hill Tree Preservation By-law

**Tourism**

Bruce County
Explore the Bruce
Grey County
Grey County Apple Pie Trail - promotion
Bruce Trail - promotion
Grey Bruce Visitor Map
Hamilton
Hamilton Agriculture Tourism
York
York Pumpkin Pie Trail Event
King Three Year Community Tourism Plan

**Trails**

Bruce County
Georgian Bay Cycling Route Feasibility Study (Fall 2013)
Peel
Greenbelt Cycling Route
Hamilton
Greenbelt Cycling Route
Halton
Greenbelt Cycling Route
Durham
Greenbelt Cycling Route
Oshawa Integrated Transportation Master Plan
Niagara
Greenbelt Cycling Route
Northumberland County
Greenbelt Cycling Route
York
Comprehensive Trails Guide for York Region
Georgina Trails and Active Transportation Master Plan Study
Greenbelt Cycling Route
York Region Lake-to-Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail
Aurora Trails Master Plan

**Economic Development**

Durham
Beaverton main street revitalization
Uxbridge Business Ambassador Program
Brock Downtown Revitalization Strategies (‘Shop Brock’ and ‘Brock’s Big Bite’)
Uxbridge Rural Economic Development Office
Uxbridge and Scugog Vibrant North Durham Economic Development Plan
Vibrant North Durham Economic Strategy
Hamilton
Hamilton Calling
Niagara
Innovate Niagara
Lincoln Economic Development Strategy
York
King + W-S Cultivating Business
King Economic Development Strategy
Georgina Socioeconomic Mission and Strategic Plan

Sustainability

Durham
Clarington Priority Green Program
Sustainable Pickering Day
Whitby Corporate Sustainability Plan
Whitby Corporate Energy Management Plan
Halton
Halton Hills Community Sustainability Implementation Committee
Halton Hills Green Development Standards
Imagine Halton Hills (Integrated Sustainability Plan)
Halton Hills Mayor’s Community Energy Plan
Toronto
Toronto Green Standard
York
King Sustainability Plan
Richmond Hill SNAP (Sustainable Neighbourhood Retrofit Action Plan) program

Education and Awareness

Halton
Halton Farm to School Group
Kawartha Lakes
Kawartha Lakes public and youth education on farming
Toronto
Biodiversity Booklets