

This section of the Official Plan addresses the economic development of West Elgin focusing on its three key sectors of agriculture, industry and commerce and tourism. Support for home based occupations and businesses is also addressed. Proposals which would foster the local economy or might otherwise be detrimental to it should be reviewed in the context of this section to establish conformity with the Plan.

*Agriculture, traditionally and to this day, is West Elgin's economic mainstay being characterized primarily by cash crop operations and the raising of livestock. While the growing of tobacco area was once significant, this is no longer the case with only two tobacco farms remaining in the municipality. Agriculturally-related commercial and industrial uses, ranging from the sale of farm-supplies and equipment, building trades, construction contractors and grain drying establishments, provide supporting infrastructure.*

*Although long considered a secondary component to the local economy, West Elgin also has a significant industrial base given its small population and largely rural character. Its manufacturing plants employ approximately 500 persons in total. Growth of the industrial sector over the past 10 years has been slow despite being highly accessible through two interchanges to Highway No. 401 and the ability to offer serviced or potentially serviced industrial sites. Key factors appear to be the area's small labour force and distance to larger urban centres (i.e. London, St. Thomas and Chatham) being situated between 50 to 70 km from Rodney and West Lorne. Shifts in manufacturing jobs overseas and the movement towards a highly skilled knowledge-based economy present additional challenges to West Elgin.*

*One particular bright development has been the introduction of bio-oil technology to Erie Flooring and Wood Products in West Lorne in 2005. The process produces green energy from oil created from the superheating of sawdust and other wood waste generated at the plant. The oil is subsequently burned in turbines creating less emissions than traditional fuels and generating enough energy to supply the plant with surplus being available to the grid. The project has attracted worldwide attention to West Lorne from scientists, engineers, investors and government.*

*The tourism potential of West Elgin seems largely untapped. While possessing a considerable stretch of Lake Erie shoreline, much of the shoreline is inaccessible due to the presence of high, steep bluffs. Unrelenting erosion, the lack of safe and convenient access and limited infrastructure combine to discourage development. Port Glasgow represents a rare exception and offers considerable potential to attract residents and visitors and, in turn, increase tourism. Preparation of a master plan is underway which will identify opportunities and improvements for the enjoyment of local residents, increase*

*tourism and act as a catalyst for the development of adjacent lands. Other points of interest to tourists include heritage sites, natural areas, small villages and campgrounds.*

*While generally small in scale, home occupations or home businesses are capable, on a cumulative basis, of being a significant contributor to local economic development. On an individual basis they are an important and, in some cases, the sole source of income. In some cases, they are an incubator for a start-up business and an ideal setting for creative pursuits. Limitations are, however, necessary so as not to undermine designated industrial and commercial areas and the 'Downtown Core', to ensure compatibility with neighbouring uses and to avoid servicing issues.*

## **2.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The following goals and objectives are designed to foster economic development in West Elgin:

- a) to maintain agriculture as a significant component of the local economy and the infrastructure necessary to support it;
- b) to attract new industries and facilitate the expansion or improvement of existing industries which have, or potentially have, the ability to increase the tax base and employment opportunities, which do not have an adverse impact on the environment and which are compatible with surrounding land uses;
- c) to enhance existing tourist attractions and develop new tourism related-establishments and activities; and
- d) to support home based occupations and businesses.

## **2.2 AGRICULTURE**

### **2.2.1 Intent**

The Municipality recognizes and values the contribution of agriculture to the local economy and shall support those measures which lead to increased production, strong commodity prices, diversity of crops, adjustments to changing marketing conditions, adoption of new practices and technology and economies of scale provided such measures are environmentally sustainable and without adverse impacts on the community.

### **2.2.2 Infrastructure**

The Municipality shall use its best efforts to maintain and improve the physical infrastructure necessary to ensure a productive and efficient local agricultural economy.

### **2.2.3 Agriculturally-related Commercial and Industrial Uses**

The establishment of agriculturally-related commercial and industrial uses and the retention and expansion of existing uses which directly serve the needs of the farm community shall be encouraged and facilitated in locations considered appropriate for these purposes by this Plan.

## **2.2.4 Secondary Farm Uses**

Uses which are secondary to the farm operation and limited in scale such as home occupations and home industries and uses that produce value-added agricultural products from the farm operation shall be encouraged.

## **2.3 INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE**

### **2.3.1 Intent**

The Municipality shall promote industrial and commercial development that would strengthen, expand and diversify its economic base, which would not burden municipal infrastructure and which would be compatible with existing development and neighbouring land uses. To this end, the Municipality shall support and facilitate the implementation of the County Economic Development Plan where it is in the best interests of the community to do so, as well as business recruitment and expansion measures in West Elgin.

### **2.3.2 Industrial and Commercial Sites**

Lands shall be designated for commercial and industrial uses which:

- a) are physically suitable for such purposes,
- b) have superior road access and visibility,
- c) are serviced or capable of being serviced, and
- d) are compatible with neighbouring uses.

### **2.3.3 Supply of Land**

The Municipality shall, at all times, ensure that a supply of designated, zoned and serviced (or potentially serviced) lands is available to ensure an appropriate mix and range of opportunities for commercial and industrial development and expansion and is protected for these purposes.

### **2.3.4 Accessibility and Visibility**

The Municipality shall promote and facilitate, to the extent its resources permit, the development of lands lying in close proximity to Highway No. 401 interchanges for commercial and industrial establishments which require or otherwise benefit by its superior visibility and accessibility. The requirements of the Ministry of Transportation and the County of Elgin governing entrances, signage, drainage and land use shall be satisfied.

### **2.3.5 Sensitive Land Uses**

The Municipality shall discourage sensitive land uses from locating in proximity to commercial or industrial uses where necessary to protect such uses from encroachment or interference with their operations.

## **2.4 TOURISM**

The Municipality shall encourage tourism through improving, and increasing awareness of, its natural and cultural heritage, through supporting new tourism initiatives, activities and establishments and through capitalizing on the untapped potential of the Lake Erie shoreline.

## **2.5 HOME OCCUPATIONS AND BUSINESSES**

Home based occupations and businesses shall be encouraged provided they are clearly secondary to the main use of the dwelling and the main use of the lands from which they are conducted. They shall be small in scale, unobtrusive in nature, compatible with neighbouring uses and in keeping with the character of the area in which they are situated. The requirements of the Elgin St. Thomas Health Unit shall be met at all times to ensure public health and safety. The range or type of home occupations or businesses permitted (and prohibited) and the standards applying to them may vary between and within the 'Village Areas' and the 'Rural Area' to ensure land use compatibility. The Zoning By-law shall address the range and type permitted and standards applying to them.

## **2.6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Municipality shall, with the assistance of the West Elgin Chamber of Commerce, prepare a local economic development plan to identify those measures and actions necessary to achieve the stated goals and objectives of this Plan with respect to economic development. The plan shall take into consideration the findings and recommendations of the Economic Development Plan 2007-2011 prepared by the County of Elgin.