

Township of Norwich SWOT Analysis Report

June 2008

**Prepared for:
The Corporation of the Township of Norwich**

Prepared by:

HCATM

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1.0 Introduction

A SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) was conducted to examine the opinions and perspectives of local business owners and key community stakeholders. The goal of this report is to provide a better understanding of the Township of Norwich's economic development status and potential from the viewpoint of community stakeholders.

Findings in this report are based on input collected from a total of 18 participants who were interviewed (14 in person and 4 by phone) as part of this process including representatives from the following sectors:

- Manufacturing (equipment and food processing)
- Agriculture
- Retail
- Construction
- Financial/accounting/real estate services
- Telecommunication services
- Government services (elected and municipal officials)
- Education

Many of the participants were involved in community organizations including:

- Township of Norwich Economic Development Advisory Committee (TNEDAC)
- Township of Norwich Chamber of Commerce
- Norwich Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA)
- Oxford Federation of Agriculture
- Norwich Medical Centre Recruitment and Retention Committee
- Wastewater Management Committee
- Heritage and Culture Committees
- Township of Norwich Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Project (completed in May 2007)

The results of the recent Township of Norwich BR&E Project Report were also reviewed as part of the SWOT analysis. The BR&E Report identifies a number of economic development related issues based on the feedback provided by 62 different businesses/community stakeholders representing over 13 different economic sectors.

Another insightful resource is the Community Priorities Initiative Report that was prepared by United Way Oxford County (Norwich Township Community Priorities Summary, January 2006). The consultation process associated with the United Way report brought together the views and opinions of 125 community leaders/stakeholders across the Township of Norwich.

The BR&E Report and the Community Priorities Initiative Report were both helpful in validating/confirming the findings that were obtained through the interview process used in the SWOT analysis.

For the purpose of this analysis, SWOT has been characterized in the following terms:

- **Strengths (Positive, Internal):** Positive attributes currently present in the Township of Norwich.
- **Weaknesses (Negative, Internal):** Local issues or characteristics that limit the current or future growth opportunities for the Township of Norwich.
- **Opportunities (Positive, Internal and External):** Areas where the Township of Norwich can attempt to remedy its weaknesses (e.g. learning from others, global change, aggressive marketing, targeted investment, etc.).
- **Threats (Negative, Internal and External):** Trends that threaten the Township of Norwich's future and attractiveness to existing and new business, from local weaknesses or global threats.

Strengths Positive Internal	Opportunities Positive Internal / External
Weaknesses Negative Internal	Threats Negative Internal / External

This report represents 1 of 3 companion research studies that were completed by Harry Cummings and Associates Inc. to inform the Township's Economic Development Strategic planning process:

1. Economic Baseline Report
2. SWOT Analysis Report
3. Competitive Analysis Report

The next four chapters of this report present the general inventory of observations / issues provided by the community stakeholders. A summary of the key findings from the SWOT analysis is provided in table format in Section 2 of this report.

An overview of the key findings of the three studies along with recommendations is presented in the Competitive Analysis Report.

1.1 Strengths

Location:

- Excellent access to Highways 401 and 403, CP and CN rail, London International Airport.
- Close proximity to major markets in London, Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo, and GTA and short travel distance to several US border crossings.

Infrastructure:

- Excellent access to Highways 401 and 403 and international airport.
- Most of the population in the Township has good internet connectivity.
- Bell provides broadband service in the Village of Norwich and in Otterville and Burgessville.
- Execulink provides broadband service to regions surrounding the villages – almost all the way up to Woodstock and as far south as Milldale.
- Cable services are provided in the villages/hamlets by Nor-del
- County has spent significant money on servicing the southern part of the Township.

Workforce and Education:

- Township has a skilled local labour force for the manufacturing and commercial sectors. Businesses are able to hire local skilled employees for the most part.
- Auto industry in nearby Woodstock is providing technical trade employment opportunities for local youth.
- Township currently features local schools in Norwich, Otterville, and Burgessville.
- Norwich District High School (NDHS) offers a creative curriculum.
- NDHS has one of the top rated student co-op programs in the province. Program is well coordinated and well received by the local business community. Program exposes youth to local job opportunities. Types of businesses involved include electrical contractor, small engine repair, hardware store, construction, agriculture, and downtown retail businesses. About 30% of students at NDHS are involved in the co-op program – currently 120 students from grade 11 and 12 involved are involved – requires about 220 hours in total and is the equivalent of 2 high school credits. Currently student interest in the program exceeds the supply of positions.
- Several Colleges (including Fanshaw and Conestoga) are in close proximity to the Township – allows for easy access to programs and to upgrade skills – important to students and local employers.

Business Climate and Entrepreneurship:

- Local Council has increasingly become more serious about economic development and long term thinking.
- Council recognizes the hardships for businesses that are trying to expand.
- Township is interested in helping people to make things work – but can only move things so far and so fast as the Township has to work within local/County/provincial regulations – sometimes the process is beyond local control.
- Township is competitive with respect to taxes – better than Woodstock.
- New EDO has been helpful in finding possible grants for community projects.
- New EDO position has facilitated communication with business interests.
- Business Improvement Association (BIA) is trying to get people motivated to be more proactive and move beyond a “wait and see” attitude.

- BIA doing a good job in beautifying the streets, etc.
- The recently completed BR&E project had good participation from many different sectors.
- BR&E project revealed a surprising amount of growth potential in the area based on the results – this represents an important message for students that there are jobs in Township.
- EDAC established about 4 months ago – although still in its early days there's hope that the committee will ensure that economic development interests will gain greater awareness and be given greater priority – 3 of the EDAC members also sit on Township Council and this should put these individuals in a much better position to be informed about economic develop issues/interests.
- Chamber of Commerce is becoming more proactive:
 - New leadership and members
 - Promoted and contributed to BR&E study
 - Recently initiated local business tours to increase awareness of what's happening in the business community and allow businesses to network and share insights
 - Produces a regular email news flashes
 - Organizing guest speakers and conducting training/education/professional development sessions
 - Promoting business growth and development
 - Networking with Tillsonburg and Woodstock chambers – sharing information/ideas.
- The Township has a good working relationship with the County of Oxford planning and public works departments. Important that this relationship be maintained given the development pressures/interests in other parts of the County – helps to facilitate development process in the Township.
- Good mix of retail businesses and professional services available in the Village of Norwich and the Township in general (grocery/convenience stores, restaurants/cafes, hardware, auto service, small engine sales/service, appliance service, gift shops, legal services, accounting services, banks).
- Good mix of local businesses to support the agricultural sector – farm supplies, feed mills, hardware, contractors, 2 new farm machinery businesses established in the last few years.
- Township has experienced some recent redevelopment and new development – Royal Bank was rebuilt, refurbished recreation centre, new library, new Tim Horton's, relocation of Liquidation Store to a new building.

Quality of Life:

- Good recreational facilities in the Village of Norwich – recreation/community centre was recently renovated.
- The Township features good value housing and several new subdivisions are under construction or planned for 4 communities.
- Strong agricultural tradition.
- Libraries located in Otterville and Burgessville and a new library and child day care centre/OEYC centre in the Village of Norwich.
- Very safe communities and low crime rate.
- Professional services are available locally – health, legal, financial, etc.
- The Township is well serviced by the Family Health Centre in the Village of Norwich.

- New EMS in the Village of Norwich - health centre is now able to do blood work – no need to travel outside Norwich to get this done.
- Health services have improved – health centre now has 3 doctors (but still long wait times at the health centre – could use 2 more doctors).
- Village of Norwich still has a post office and MTO office.
- Township is in close proximity to larger urban centres such as Woodstock and London – offers residents that benefits of living in a small community while having easy access to larger urban centres as needed.
- Strong sense of community pride
 - Community recently raised \$1 million for the new library – the target was \$750,000.
 - Recent downtown beautification projects in the Village of Norwich – walkway to parking lot
 - Ongoing community support to maintain NDHS.

Strengths identified by HCA in the BR&E Report (May 2007):

- Business forecast for growth in next 3 years is encouraging:
 - 39 companies expect higher sales next year
 - 24 companies plan to expand
 - 23 companies plan to invest in new equipment
 - 24 companies plan to hire new employees
- Most businesses are able to find qualified employees eventually
- Many businesses have participated in the NDHS co-op program and consider students as very important employees in addressing their labour needs – funding programs for student labour is important for many businesses
- Many businesses have intern or apprenticeship programs
- Township of Norwich Chamber of Commerce is growing stronger – 17 members
- Business Improvement Area established by the Township in 1979

Strengths identified by HCA in the Community Priorities Initiative Report (Jan. 2006):

- Main street stores are mostly occupied
- NDHS has been an innovator in offering unique programs
- New subdivisions being built in several communities
- New library in the Village of Norwich
- Upgrades being made to the community centre in the Village of Norwich – potentially more programs

1.2 Weaknesses

Land Availability:

- The Township has a very limited amount of serviced land which limits its ability to try and attract/recruit businesses and families.
- The only land that is serviced and ready for commercial development in the Township, is not owned by the Township. Most of this land is owned by a single owner – therefore, the availability of the land is contingent on the interests of this one owner.
- Land along Highways 401 and 403 in the Township is in private hands and could be too costly for the Township to purchase for future development.
- The north and south parts of the Township have different soil profiles. The south has sandy soils which grow a more limited range of crops and are at greater drought risk and require irrigation, but irrigation has to be restricted due to water shortages.

Infrastructure:

- Not all areas of the Township have broadband access - some areas are using dial up services.
- Township has some cellular phone dead spots.
- Local utilities are costly.
- Ongoing work needed in repairing sidewalks in communities – considered a safety issue that needs urgent attention.
- The main street of the Village of Norwich has a lot of truck traffic and the lights at the intersection have been damaged on several occasions because of the limited turn space at the intersection.
- The Village of Norwich is the only fully serviced community in the Township.
- Wastewater and water capacity is limited and needs to be addressed now given the time it takes for the planning to be approved, construction, etc. Uncertainty if the Wastewater Management Committee is doing enough to promote the interests of the Township. Need to add water capacity for residential and industrial growth - at the moment the only new industrial development that can be accommodated is clean industry (i.e. low water requirements). Need to start the environmental study now or risk losing out to other communities that are moving forward with development agendas. Doesn't appear as though the County is interested in development in the Township. Township does not want to be left in a position where it is not able to issue permits because of lack of service.
- There are occasional electricity brown outs – usually can count on a power outage every winter due to weather. However, this was not viewed as something that would necessarily drive a business out of the area.
- Occasional hydro brown outs in the area – however most industries would have a back up generator as insurance.
- Need a plan to rehabilitate public buildings.

Workforce and Education:

- Difficult to recruit/hire/keep managers and engineers. The location of the Township can be a disincentive for some higher skilled professions such as engineers.
- Difficult to find skilled welders
- It seems inevitable that NDHS will be closed/converted to super elementary school. This could prove to be a major disincentive to moving/living in the Township. If the residents want the school to be maintained as it is, may have to consider paying a surcharge.
- Limited number of jobs for youth in the area.

Business Climate and Entrepreneurship:

- Although Council has become more serious about economic development the planning and approval process is still taking too long.
- Businesses used to be able work directly with Township staff on development issues but the process has become so prolonged that businesses now require an agent to work on their behalf and stay on top of the County to move the process along. Used to take about 6 months to get a site plan approval and now it can take 1 or 2 years – often held up at the County level.
- The Township needs to become an ‘enabler’ for entrepreneurs and be more proactive where it can in assisting businesses and working with the County to help move the process along.
- Current government (local and County) is not based on a client service model which results in very damaging first impressions. County/Township staff come across as disinterested and uncompassionate.
- Township needs to be able to provide accurate information to entrepreneurs – prepare a checklist of materials that are required for development and be better informed about requirements and the appropriate referrals.
- Township staff need to become more knowledgeable about development policy regulations to provide businesses with clear and accurate information and directions – and then use a more client friendly approach to provide the information.
- Township needs to provide clear communication to help businesses determine where funding/financing can be accessed to assist development
- Businesses are on their own in terms of trying to promote economic development. Township offers very little support for new entrepreneurs or existing businesses that are looking to expand.
- General business frustration with government administration and planning/development restrictions. It is a very time consuming process to develop anything which makes it difficult to quickly respond to changing market conditions – other municipalities may have an advantage.
- Township has a lack of leadership in economic development. There is no economic development plan/strategy in place for the Township.
- Can be difficult to get information in front of Council due to changes in the schedule and/or agenda.
- EDO position needs to be given wider scope of responsibility. EDO has been great in networking / facilitating communication with business interests but the position seems to have very limited authority to take on initiatives.
- Township is sometimes unfairly blamed for development issues/challenges which are outside of its jurisdiction. Township receives backlash for following/adhering to County and provincial policies.
- Township by law enforcement officials do not adequately respond to complaints – e.g. parking limit violations in the Village of Norwich.
- Some businesses in the Township seem to be content to let others do all of the work in relation to promoting the local shopping experience and championing the maintenance and upkeep of the downtown area.
- The Official Plan places too many restrictions on operations – e.g. not allowed to advertise on the front lawn, severances only allowed on adjoining lands, etc.
- Lack of a Township strategy to draw people to the Township to live and visit.

- Downtown villages/hamlets are hurting as there is little traffic resulting in limited business – need to do a better job marketing the unique shopping experience in the Township villages/hamlets.
- Most stores are not open on Sunday, in recognition of the Dutch community religious practice. Those stores that have tried to open have been approached by members of the Dutch community and asked to respect their customs. Store owners concerned that they'll be boycotted by members of the Dutch community if they open on Sunday. Dutch and Amish represent very distinct communities in the Township. The challenge is turning this situation into an opportunity.
- Planning is missing from Township discussions and research.
- Lack of follow-up plan to act on the results of the BR&E study.
- Rural residents have unrealistic expectations - they want everything in terms of development but don't want to spend the money to get it and they don't want to have to wait. Development could mean a tax increase but no one wants to shoulder this cost.
- In some cases residents are anti-development or have unrealistic expectations about the type of development they want in their community. For example, in Otterville the residents wanted residential development but with the condition that the lots be large. However, this represents a less profitable approach for the developers.
- Residents have unrealistic expectations about what decisions the Township staff can make independently of the County – many residents have memories of when planning approval could be granted within 6 months but it now takes a year or more to get approval. There is a greater need for patience and respect on both sides of the issue. Increasingly, residents need to have a development consultant assist them with the application process and also legal services – this adds to the time and cost and builds further frustration. Concerns that if residents complain too loudly to the County it could further impact the quality and timeliness of service that the Township receives.
- Relationship with the County and other municipalities such as Woodstock is not as it should be – need greater cooperation and understanding in economic development matters – County owns the water and sewage infrastructure and is responsible for deciding where upgrades and expansion will take place – need to work more closely with the County and continue to advocate the importance/advantages/need for water/sewage upgrades in the Township
- Farmers not happy with regulatory environment and restrictions on value added production
- Farmers are required to abide by environmental farm plans and other regulations but are not compensated for this activity – society benefits and farmers have to pay the cost.

Quality of Life:

- Family Health Centre in the Village of Norwich is still understaffed (has 3 doctors but 2 more are needed)
- The Recreation Department is not as helpful as it could be in preparing and maintaining the local facilities for events.
- There is greater housing value in other communities such as Woodstock

Weaknesses identified in the BR&E Report (May 2007):

- Local planning office needs to be more of a resource for local business and an enabler of business development – not just an enforcer of policy/by-laws.
- Need to improve the planning/engineering, zoning and approval process.
- Limited availability of properly zoned land for expansion of existing business and development of new businesses.
- Reliable electrical energy supply is a concern for 27 businesses.
- Lack of a local strategy to promote local businesses and the goods and services that are available locally.
- Street furniture and public amenities need improvement.
- 7 retail businesses identified the need for a customer service program – retailers need to be providing better consumer oriented service.
- Stores closed on Sunday – limits economic activity – other communities gain the advantage.

Weaknesses identified in the Community Priorities Initiative Report (Jan. 2006):

- Main street stores are mostly occupied but some areas look run down and need to be refreshed
- Physician recruitment is critical – services and reputation must be restored.
- Lack of leadership – institutions such as 4H and Junior Farmers not attracting youth the way they used to.
- Need an overall growth plan for the Township – ensure that services can keep up with new housing, commercial, industrial, etc.
- No public transit – transportation is a problem for seniors.

1.3 Opportunities

Land Availability:

- More community members need to look inward at what they can do to enable economic development. Land owners sitting on vacant development land need to sell it or rent it for development rather than leaving it vacant and waiting for highest offer.
- Council needs to look at potential for acquiring land from private property owners – to ensure that land is available as the development opportunities arise.
- The land area along Highways 401 and 403 needs to be looked at as a development site for the Township. Need to sit down with the County of Oxford and the City of Woodstock and determine their intentions for development in the area and how the Township can fit into these plans – determine who is best suited to service this area. Examine options for a partnership with the other governments to get the land developed and turn it into cash flow for the Township. The Blandford-Blenheim boundary adjustment agreement with Woodstock represents a possible model to follow. Could be a challenge to get all of the relevant property owners in the area to agree but in the Blandford-Blenheim case they managed to reach agreements with the 25 property owners which indicates that it can be accomplished if the will exists.
- The future development of the land along Highways 401 and 403 may depend on the growth of auto industry and the need for additional land. If a deal can be managed with the City of Woodstock the Township would ideally want the land developed as soon as possible rather than being left vacant. Currently there's a quarry and a couple businesses in the area and the Township can't afford to lose this tax base while the County/Woodstock decide what to do with the land.

Infrastructure:

- In the event that Otterville Public School becomes available examine the potential for converting the school to the new Township Office.
- Need to take immediate action in addressing waste water system for the Village of Norwich. Township needs to work to bring private developers and County officials to the table to develop a strategy/solution.
- More people are moving to the area and working from home via the use of the Internet

Workforce and Education:

- Considerable optimism about the new Toyota plant and related manufacturing in the Woodstock area. The development will provide additional source of jobs for local residents and bring new money into the local economy. Need to promote the rural, small town lifestyle that's available in the Township to the auto industry workforce.
- Strong desire to try and maintain NDHS with the understanding that the school has to be somehow restructured / rebranded. Possible options identified include:
- Expand the grades based on a grade 7-12 model.
- Develop an agriculture training program in the local high school as another unique element of the curriculum at NDHS.

Business Climate and Entrepreneurship:

- Council needs to continue to work on developing a vision for economic development with a strategic plan and timelines to get there.
- Partnerships must be developed between the Township and private property owners to ensure that serviced land is more readily available for development.

- Council needs to take the lead in developing a definition of quality service protocols and introduce these to all staff members.
- Develop a more formalized approach for the Township government to promote / facilitate business development.
- Maintain and expand the role of the EDO position beyond the life of this project – either in a full time or part time capacity. Expand the role of the EDO to aggressively enhance the economic development capacity of the Township and promote the Township's interest in economic development and establishing closer relations with the County of Oxford and the City of Woodstock. Expand role of the EDO to actively serve/respond to the interests of the business community and explore opportunities for attracting new businesses to the area. Development of a retail sector development/marketing strategy to attract customer traffic could be part of the EDO role (e.g. develop a retail theme for the Township and work with retailers to promote and market the goods and service tied to the theme).
- Need to raise awareness of the role of the EDO in the community as many businesses are accustomed to doing things on their own – the EDO could ensure that businesses receive timely and accurate information in relation to planning / development issues that they'll need to consider.
- If there is insufficient funding to maintain the EDO position, examine opportunities for sharing an EDO with one or two other municipalities or examine the options proposed in the Oxford County Economic Base Analysis and Rural Development Strategy for the establishment of a Rural Development Program including a dedicated Rural Development Officer serving the 5 rural municipalities in the County (with the funding for the position to be shared by the rural municipalities and the County).
- The County of Oxford is in the process of putting a master plan together. Need to make sure that the Township views are presented and that the County remains aware of the potential for development along Highways 401 and 403 and the willingness of the Township to work with the County and the City of Woodstock.
- Public education / awareness campaign needed to better inform residents about the County Official Plan and where responsibilities rest for decision making (i.e. County vs. Township). Assist residents in understanding the County's expectations with respect to level of preparedness and presentation in submitting applications.
- Examine opportunities to partner with other local municipalities to make group purchases of supplies/materials. The Township is currently partnering when purchasing sand and salt but there could be other applications in relation to supplies and services. Look for guidance from models in place in other municipalities.
- Examine opportunities for assisting agri-related business expand or locate in the Township.
- Encourage farm based businesses – e.g. contractors. Would need to negotiate a more flexible policy with the County that allows for any member of the farm family to reside on the business operation.
- Examine and promote value added opportunities associated with the agriculture sector. Expansion of food processing / meat packing / agri-related services as agriculture still a vital part of the local economy.
- Consider focusing on small and medium sized manufacturing businesses: agri-related businesses linked to the local agriculture sector and auto-industry support businesses linked to the auto sector activity in Woodstock.
- Transportation firms would find the proximity to 401 and 403 to be very attractive.
- Township has a good retail base with respect to groceries, hardware, etc. Need to look at additional opportunities for promoting the growth of specialty/niche stores – can't

compete with shopping complexes in Woodstock – need to offer a different shopping experience in the Township featuring more personalized service – brand it as a unique shopping experience.

Quality of Life:

- Develop and promote more arts and cultural activities for local residents and to attract visitors.
- Township features a good mix of businesses. Promote initiatives to enhance the shopping experience for local residents and visitors. Emphasize the importance of delivering quality service.
- Examine opportunities for using locums to address the local doctor shortage. This will provide doctors with an opportunity to discover what the Township has to offer and perhaps persuade some doctors to relocate.
- Commuters traveling through the region may be looking for an alternative driving route/experience to avoid the 401 traffic. Develop an attractive alternative country driving route through the communities. Develop and promote alternative shopping experience for those looking for something different from the malls and big box stores.
- Small town living is a very attractive notion to some families rather than living in larger urban centres/suburbs

Opportunities identified by HCA in the BR&E Report (May 2007):

- Key to expansion is having a supply of well serviced, properly zoned land and an available workforce.
- The majority of companies (24 of 38) believe the Township should take a more active role in promoting economic development while providing more support and a streamlining of the by-law process.
- The role of the EDO is imperative to the expansion and development of business in the Township.
- Majority of businesses import goods and services from outside the Township.
- Potential programs and services that could benefit retail include:
 - Business directories/brochures/maps
 - Physical improvements to public areas
 - Retail and special event coordination
 - Web based marketing/promotions
- Community assets to be developed: trails, cultural facilities, markets and public washrooms.
- Relatively few businesses making use of the internet to market their goods and services and yet many businesses identify marketing outside the local area as an important factor in remaining competitive.
- Many businesses also see the value in improving their customer service.
- Business planning and strategic marketing viewed by many businesses as an important part of remaining competitive.
- Research needed to determine if farmers/community would support a farmers market in Norwich.
- Career day viewed as an important way to assist youth in finding employment locally.
- 25 companies would be willing to participate in a Business Ambassador program.
- 27 businesses indicated they would like to participate in business networking sessions.
- 25 businesses would like some assistance in workforce planning, employee training/attraction.

- 22 businesses would like to see joint advertising and marketing initiatives – including participation of the Township.
- 21 businesses would like to participate in marketing seminars and website development.
- Look at options for expanding the definition of on farm industry – options for promoting more value added production on the farm.
- BR&E Action Plan Opportunities:
 - Look at opportunities to promote a better business climate – improved planning process service at Township and County level
 - Develop a retail sector marketing strategy
 - Township should look at potential for partnering with Woodstock e.g. land annexation
 - Township should look at options for acquiring land to service economic development – develop a business park

Opportunities identified by HCA in the Community Priorities Initiative Report (Jan. 2006):

- No economic development opportunities identified.

1.4 Threats

Land Availability:

- Existing businesses in the Township could relocate elsewhere due to the lack of serviced property to allow for expansion.
- Ontario Greenbelt policy is resulting in leapfrog development which could be detrimental to the local agriculture sector.

Infrastructure:

- Other municipalities offering a sufficient supply of well serviced, competitively priced sites for development
- Other municipalities offering aggressive development incentives (e.g. facilitating access to major transportation corridors)

Workforce and Education:

- Reduction in agriculture workforce due to ongoing consolidation in the agricultural sector and ongoing farm income issues – number of farms and farmers are declining (however, productivity is increasing)
- Out migration of skilled workers due to perception that larger companies offer more career advantages
- Potential impact resulting from the loss of NDHS and school restructuring:
 - Reduction of local jobs in the education sector
 - Reduction of the re-spending of wages earned from the education sector in the local economy
 - Loss of affordable labour for local businesses that rely on students. Students may look for after school work opportunities closer to where they attend school.
 - Students gain less experience in local businesses. Could feed into perception that there are no local work opportunities.
 - Greater challenge to coordinate a school co-op program in other schools that will respond to needs of businesses in the Township
 - Loss of local schools negatively impacts the quality of life in the area – could influence businesses, employees, health service providers, families to locate elsewhere

Business Climate and Entrepreneurship:

- Lack of a clear vision for promoting development
- Failure to develop and implement an economic development strategy
- Aggressive incentives provided by other municipalities
- The existing serviced lands in the Township are controlled by few individuals
- Poor customer service at the County and local government level could turn potential investors off
- Slow administration associated with processing development plans represents a great disincentive to entrepreneurs and existing businesses.
- Recent loss of 6 businesses could promote pessimism among small businesses if not countered
- High Canadian dollar and government policy. Value of our dollar is impacting exports to the US - currently hitting pork producers hard as they rely on US market. Tobacco producers are still in process of transitioning to alternative crops – many farmers are still in the experimentation phase of determining what crops will provide a decent return on investment.

- Costs of conducting environmental impact assessment for farm expansion could deter operators from expanding their farm operation.
- Ministry of the Environment reviews are adding time to the approval process.
- Urban planning policy at the provincial level does not fit with needs of the Township

Quality of Life:

- Communities in the Township of Norwich could become bedroom communities for the City of Woodstock as residents commute out of the Township to work and shop.

Threats identified by HCA in the BR&E Report (May 2007):

- 41 businesses expect the level of competition in their market to grow
- 31 businesses reported that the closure of NDHS would negatively impact their business – most businesses are not supportive of NDHS being converted to K-10 structure – want it to remain as 9-12 structure
- 45 businesses believe the closure of NDHS will have a negative economic impact on the Township
- 44 businesses believe the closure of NDHS will have a negative social impact on the Township

Threats identified by HCA in the Community Priorities Initiative Report (Jan. 2006):

- Loss of community identity if NDHS closed or restructured.
- Loss of community identity if schools in Otterville and Burgessville closed.
- Off farm income increasingly required to support family farms – need new employment opportunities.

2.0 SWOT Summary / Key Findings

Infrastructure	
Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent access to highways and international airport • No traffic congestion on Township roads • Good Internet connectivity and cellular phone coverage in most parts of the Township • New subdivisions being built in several communities • New library in the Village of Norwich • Recent upgrades made to the community centre in the Village of Norwich 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway 401 and 403 pass through the Township – represents a key site selection factor for businesses • Establish closer planning/development ties with the County and advocate the importance/advantages/need for added water/sewage capacity • Private sector may be interested in working with the Township and the County in developing a wastewater strategy. • School restructuring process could make the Otterville Public School available as a possible new site for the Township Office. • Internet connectivity allows for more home based business activity – provide educational/training opportunities to enable local businesses to get the most out of the Internet • Continue to work to enhance downtown areas: sidewalks, intersections, street furniture/fixtures, public spaces, etc.
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some areas of the Township are still relying on dial-up Internet service • Local utilities are viewed as costly • Sidewalks need improvement • Main street intersections need improvements to better accommodate truck traffic • The Village of Norwich is the only fully serviced community in the Township • Wastewater and water capacity is limited to support residential and industrial growth • Reliability of electrical energy – occasional brown outs • Lack of a plan for rehabilitating public buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other municipalities offering a sufficient supply of well serviced, competitively priced sites for development • Other municipalities offering aggressive development incentives (e.g. facilitating access to major transportation corridors)

Workforce and Education

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Township has a skilled local labour force for the manufacturing and commercial sectors – many local businesses are able to find qualified employees eventually • Auto industry in Woodstock and Ingersoll is providing technical trade employment opportunities for local youth • Many local businesses have intern or apprenticeship programs • Township features local schools in Norwich, Otterville, and Burgessville • NDHS offers a creative curriculum. • NDHS has an excellent student co-op program – many local businesses support the program • Several colleges and universities are in close proximity to the Township 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of the auto sector in the area will provide an additional source of jobs for local residents and attract a larger workforce to the area – promote the benefits of the small town lifestyle that’s available in the Township • Strong community interest to maintain NDHS with recognition that a new model is needed. Possible options identified include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand the grades based on a grade 7-12 model ○ Develop an agriculture training program at NDHS as another unique element of the curriculum ○ Consider applying school surcharge to local residents for maintaining the school • Expand promotion of the high school co-op program to local businesses • Career days are viewed as an important way to assist youth in finding employment locally • Provide training opportunities for local businesses with respect to workforce planning and employee attraction / relations / training
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to recruit/hire/keep some skilled professions (e.g. managers, engineers, welders) • Uncertainty of the future of NDHS and local elementary schools • Loss of school co-op program could result in reduced youth exposure to local employment opportunities and a less skilled local workforce • Limited number of jobs for youth in the local communities • Level of interest in the NDHS co-op program currently exceeds the supply of jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the agriculture workforce • Out migration of skilled workers due to perception that larger companies offer more career advantages • Funding programs for student labour is important for many businesses – loss of funding could impact the availability of these positions • Loss of NDHS / school restructuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reduction of local jobs in the education sector ○ Loss of affordable labour for local businesses that rely on students ○ Loss of co-op program and reduction in youth exposure to local job opportunities ○ Greater disincentive for families and businesses to stay here / move to the area

Business Climate and Entrepreneurship

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development Advisory Committee recently established with strong Council representation – Council is better positioned to stay informed of development issues • Economic Development Officer hired for 2 year period • Competitive tax rates • Township has a good working relationship with the County of Oxford planning and public works departments • Good mix of retail and professional service businesses • Good mix of agri-related businesses • Excellent participation in the recent BR&E study • Local business groups are becoming more proactive – Chamber of Commerce, BIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and implement a customer based quality service protocol for Township staff • Enhance capacity of Township staff to provide customers with accurate / up to date information on development policies / regulations and application requirements • Examine opportunities for streamlining the application/permit approval process • Implement public awareness campaign to inform residents about the County Official Plan and the role/responsibilities of County vs. Township officials • Examine opportunities for retaining the EDO position and expanding the role/responsibilities of the EDO to proactively promote economic development (or establish a Rural Development Officer in conjunction with the County/other rural municipalities as suggested in the Oxford County Rural Development Strategy) • Develop business promotional materials in conjunction with the business community • Continue to work toward developing an economic development plan/ strategy • Support business sector training initiatives (e.g. enhancing consumer services, marketing, workforce planning) • Support the development of a Business Ambassador program • Work in conjunction with the County to encourage the growth of farm based businesses (e.g. contractors) • Examine small and medium sized manufacturing opportunities linked to the local agriculture and auto-industry sectors • Proximity to 401 and 403 is very attractive to transportation firms • Develop a retail sector marketing strategy - differentiate the local shopping experience from large retail outlets in large urban centres - promote the growth of specialty/niche stores and more personalized service • Develop partnerships between the Township and private property owners to ensure that the available serviced land is more readily available for development and/or examine options for the Township to acquire the available serviced land from private property owners • The County of Oxford is in the process of putting a master plan together. Ensure that Township views are presented and that the County remains aware of the potential for development along Highways 401 and 403 and the willingness of the Township to work with the County and the City of Woodstock.

Business Climate and Entrepreneurship cont.

Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow permitting process – involves multiple levels of government • Current government service model (local and County) is not based on a client service model • Township staff lack sufficient knowledge of policies/guidelines • Township lacks an economic development plan/strategy and a business and economic development 'champion' • EDO position is temporary and too limited in scope • Insufficient marketing effort to promote local shopping • Most stores are closed Sunday in recognition of local customs/beliefs which impacts local retail activity / opportunities • Retailers need to provide better consumer service • The southern part of the Township has sandy soils which grow a more limited range of crops and are at greater drought risk and require irrigation, but irrigation has to be restricted due to water shortages • Amount of serviced land available is very limited • Available commercial/industrial land is privately owned by a few individuals – could be too costly for the Township to purchase • Land along Highways 401 and 403 in the Township is in private hands and could be too costly for the Township to purchase and service for future development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a clear vision for promoting development • Failure to develop and implement an economic development strategy • Aggressive incentives provided by other municipalities • Poor customer service at the County and local government level could turn potential investors off • High Canadian dollar is impacting products/commodities that rely on exports to the U.S. • Cost and time to conduct environmental impact assessment for farm expansion could deter operators from expanding their farm operation • Existing businesses in the Township relocate elsewhere due to the lack of readily available serviced property • The future development of the land along Highways 401 and 403 may depend on the growth of auto industry and the need for additional land. County of Oxford may not be interested in supporting a boundary adjustment with Woodstock to facilitate the development. May not be able to reach an agreement with private property owners in the region. Woodstock could acquire the land but then hold off on developing the land immediately • Aggressive incentives provided by other municipalities • Ontario Greenbelt policy results in leapfrog development which raises land values – land could be held by speculators, could be detrimental to the local agriculture sector. • Urban planning policy at the provincial level does not fit with needs of the Township

Quality of Life	
Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good recreational/community facility in the Village of Norwich – recently upgraded • Good value housing in the Township and several new subdivisions are under construction or planned • Strong local agricultural tradition • Schools and libraries located in Norwich, Otterville and Burgessville • Very safe communities and low crime rate • Professional services are available locally – health, legal, financial, etc. • Family Health Centre in the Village of Norwich including new EMS • Easy access to larger urban centres such as Woodstock and London • Strong sense of community pride <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community recently raised \$1 million for the new library – the target was \$750,000. ○ Recent downtown beautification projects in the Village of Norwich – walkway to parking lot ○ Ongoing community support to maintain NDHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and promote more arts and cultural activities for local residents and to attract visitors. • Township features a good mix of businesses. Promote initiatives to enhance the shopping experience for local residents and visitors. Emphasize the importance of delivering quality service • Examine opportunities for using locums to address the local doctor shortage. This will provide doctors with an opportunity to discover what the Township has to offer and perhaps persuade some doctors to relocate • Commuters traveling through the region may be looking for an alternative driving route/experience to avoid the 401 traffic. Develop an attractive alternative country driving route through the communities. Develop and promote alternative shopping experience for those looking for something different from the malls and big box stores. • Small town living is a very attractive notion to some families rather than living in larger urban centres/suburbs • Community assets to be developed: trails, cultural facilities, markets and public washrooms
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty about the future of NDHS and elementary schools – possible restructuring involving loss of local high school • Family Health Centre in the Village of Norwich has 3 doctors but 2 more are still needed • The Recreation Department is not as helpful as it could be in preparing and maintaining the local facilities for events • Lack of shopping and entertainment options - many local stores are closed on Sunday • No public transit – transportation is a problem for seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing family doctor shortage • Loss of community identity if NDHS closed or restructured • Loss of community identity if schools in Otterville and Burgessville closed • Local communities could become bedroom communities for the City of Woodstock as residents commute out of the Township to work and shop