**Greenbelt Foundation Final Report**

**Grand River Environmental Network**

**Building Support for Greenbelt Friendly Local Planning and Greenbelt Expansion in the Grand River Watershed**

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**1) What were the main activities, top outcomes and longer-term impacts accomplished?**

Our main activities focussed as planned on:

1) Ensuring Greenbelt-friendly policies and sustainability in our Regional Official Plan Update, and

2) Ensuring broad participation and support for any potential expansion of the Provincial Greenbelt in the Grand River Watershed.

1) With regards to our area MCR’s we:

a) Raised awareness and encouraged public participation in numerous meetings and events throughout the entire Official Plan Update process at both the municipal and regional level. This included:

- Regional Council Delegations

- Regional Committee Presentations

- Municipal Council Delegations

b) Created an alliance of community groups and organizations interested in Regional Official Plans and good governance. Held regular meetings, sent regular e-mails, updates, and communications to citizens and community groups to collaborate, raise awareness, educate and encourage participation. This has included:

- Regular meetings and updates

- Extensive communication between dozens of area non-profit and community organizations

- Extensive communications from each group to their membership

c) Met with staff and elected officials to increase environmental awareness and sustainability, improve environmental outcomes, and ensured more opportunities for public participation in Official Plans. This included:

- Meetings with Regional Staff, the Regional Chair, and Councillors

- Meetings with Municipal Staff, Mayors, and Councillors

d) Ensured recommended MCR scenarios had a strong environmental, intensification and sustainability focus. This included:

- Working with planning schools, area universities, professors, and planning experts to ensure the best possible planning and processes

- Outreach and education/webinars for community groups on good planning fundamentals

e) Worked to ensure strong public awareness, engagement, and involvement in the MCR processes and final outcomes. This included:

- Worked with area newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and other media to increase public awareness and involvement in MCR activities

- Webinars, presentations and other online meetings to educate and inform citizens, groups, staff, and elected officials

- Considerable social media and online efforts to inform and provide a steady stream of information to our communities

- Significant media coverage of the Regional Official Plan process and final approval

The outcome has been a bold, visionary Regional Official Plan focussed on sustainability, 15 minute complete communities, affordable housing, housing supply, farmland preservation, greenspace protection, active transportation, and new public transit that will allow our part of the province to continue its global leadership and also serves as a model for other communities across Ontario.

The long-term impacts of this progressive MCR plan will be felt for generations as it will completely transform how we live, where/how we work, and how we get around. It balances our environment and economy while ensuring that we will be as successful as at confronting our climate crisis

2) With regards to the potential expansion of the Greenbelt in SouthWestern Ontario we:

a) Raised awareness and encouraged strong public participation in the provincial Greenbelt expansion consultation.

b) Helped to create an alliance of community and environmental groups interested in Greenbelt expansion across the Grand River Watershed and participated in regular weekly planning meetings that are still continuing to see what can be accomplished in the years ahead.

c) Met with a wide variety of officials, advocates, organizations and community groups to promote Greenbelt expansion and stewardship. This included:

- Meetings and Moraine Tours with MPP’s

- Meetings and Moraine Tours with Regional and Municipal Councillors

- Meetings and Moraine Tours with Staff

- Meetings and Moraine Tours with Community Groups and Organizations

d) Collaborated with numerous area organizations to help develop a strategy, plan and mapping for Greenbelt expansion in the Grand River Watershed, then held a very successful launch event that garnered significant media coverage. This included:

- MPPs from 3 political parties in attendance

- Local and Regional elected officials in attendance

- Strong public participation

- Numerous newspaper articles and television coverage

e) Ongoing public awareness, engagement and involvement on the need and opportunity for Greenbelt expansion. This included:

- Extensive social media engagement including Facebook and Twitter

- Considerable coverage on websites and through e-mail

- Webinars and education activities to our communities

- Considerable media outreach, engagement and news coverage

While the outcome of the provincial review was not the extensive Greenbelt expansion along the Paris-Galt Moraine as so many thousands of local citizens and groups had sought, the groundwork has been set for the future including mapping, education, awareness, media relations, and the need for better protections across our extensive watershed.

The long-term impact is the readiness of our communities for Greenbelt expansion. There is a huge opportunity for the provincial government to make a tremendous impact for future generations with the expansion of the very successful provincial Greenbelt into our municipalities.

**What activities or strategies were most successful and why?**

1) Municipal Comprehensive Review/Official Plans

Waterloo Region has traditionally lead with visionary planning ideals and has pioneered numerous new planning concepts here in Canada. Our community has numerous groups focussed on planning issues such as Smart Growth Waterloo Region and Hold The Line Waterloo Region that we have been able to partner and engage with for impressive outcomes.

We also engaged in a very successful and unprecedented joint partnership with the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture to work together with farmers on the most successful long-term vision and plans for our communities.

Initial issues and concerns with the first drafts of Regional Official Plan helped to generate considerable media attention and public involvement that we were able to leverage to create a broad alliance of community groups working towards similar goals of sustainability, environmental protection, public engagement, community consultation and the best possible planning outcomes.

The plan we were able to successfully achieve not only has really strong farmland and greenspace protections – with near unanimous support from all sides for the Countryside Line Concept and Protected Countryside but also achieved far more than we expected towards housing affordability and increasing housing supply in the most sustainable manner possible using intensification, accessory units, and other methods that should rapidly boost housing choice, availability, and affordability.

It has been impressive to see so many hundreds of citizens in our community speak up and become involved in the Municipal Comprehensive Review planning process. Our community is much stronger and we have far a better long-term plan because of this strong participation and collaboration.

2) Greenbelt Stewardship and Expansion

The high environmental awareness in Guelph, Waterloo, and other parts of the Grand River Watershed along with repeated efforts to have these areas included in the Greenbelt created an ideal network of community groups and organizations that we have been able to pull together to work towards common goals for Greenbelt expansion.

While not easy to have such large, diverse teams working on things the results have been powerful and we are optimistic that our efforts will achieve impressive results across our vast region over the years ahead.

**What challenges did you face?**

One of the primary challenges we faced was the ongoing pandemic and the limiting of public activities and events. The pandemic also impacted timelines for the Official Plan processes. The sheer scope of the ROP and the need to engage all lower-tier municipalities as well as upper tier significantly increased the scope and challenge of achieving our successful outcome.

As well, the provincial government provided limited information on the Greenbelt Review, timing, or next steps on potential Greenbelt expansion which made it difficult to anticipate or plan.

**What were the main lessons learned? How will these guide your future Greenbelt-related work?**

One of the main lessons learned was the power of collaboration and working together as an entire community to overcome challenges and achieve ambitious outcomes – particularly with the new Regional Official Plan. It was simply incredible the amount of time that our farmers and planners in the community put into achieving the best possible plan that so many had claimed would be impossible.

Our focus continues unchanged on both the MCR and Greenbelt expansion activities. We have had tremendous outcomes and success to date and will continue to move forward – hopefully with significant impact and positive results.

**List your main communications and public/stakeholder engagement outcomes (press, social media, membership growth, etc.).**

Our communications, engagement and media coverage has been extensive – particularly for the short timelines and modest funding for this project.

1) Municipal Comprehensive Review and Official Plans

- co-ordinated dozens of delegations to Regional and Municipal Councils

- extensive meetings with Chairs, Mayors, Councillors and Staff

- in-depth meetings with Regional and Municipal Staff

- meetings and presentations to MPP’s and MP’s

- numerous community webinars engaging hundreds of participants

- extensive media coverage with dozens of newspaper articles, radio, and television coverage

- considerable engagement on social media with tens of thousands of social media impressions on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

2) Greenbelt Stewardship and Expansion

- detailed meetings with Chairs, Mayors, Councillors and Staff

- in-depth meetings with Regional and Municipal Staff

- tours, meetings and presentations to MPP’s and MPP candidates

- very successful Greenbelt Map launch event in collaboration with area groups

- extensive media coverage with ongoing newspaper articles, radio and television coverage

- ongoing engagement on social media, new websites in development, etc.

**Is there anything else that you would like to share with the Foundation about the project?**

I don’t think that we can overestimate the impact that this project has had – both over the past year and in the decades ahead. While it was extremely disappointing not to see any expansion of the Greenbelt it wasn’t for a lack of effort and completely new groups and alliances were formed that look like they will endure for the long-term to achieve the goal of much needed Greenbelt protections for these vital parts of Ontario left out of the balance that others in province take for granted.

Even more significantly has been the Municipal Comprehensive Review impact that has seen groups across the community working together in completely new and innovative ways. It has spawned the creation of completely new groups such as GreenWR that have spun into their own thriving entities determined to enact future change. The significance and impact of this Regional Official Plan will be global and its visionary nature provides a model for all of Ontario as it transforms the lives of what will be almost 1 million people over the next 30 years.

Please let us know any questions, ideas or if further information is required for any subject.

**2) Budget – see project budget report template**

Due to the rapidly changing nature of both the provincial Greenbelt expansion announcement and the greatly extended and far more intensive Regional Official Plan process after meeting with Shelley Petrie and Bizhan Roshan we reallocated some project budget amounts late in the Spring to allocate more resources to Personnel Costs and Project Co-ordinators and less to other cost centres. The overall expenditure to the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation remains consistent.

Specifically:

- $1,540 was reallocated from Social Media/Website Co-ordination to Personnel Costs

- $1,000 was reallocated from Reports & Online Resources to Personnel Costs

- $1,960 was reallocated from GREN Overhead to Personnel Costs

**3) Workplan Report Template - ontrack, delayed, completed, suspended…**

**Expected Results, Activities, Performance Indicators**

All activities are on-track and moving forward as anticipated with many far exceeding expectations.

**4) Expense claims statement**

In progress

**5) Receipts**

In progress

**6) Resources- reports, media coverage, tools, photos, videos, etc.**

Media files and coverage archive can be supplied upon request…

Please let us know any questions or suggestions.