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ENCOURAGING FARM GATE SALES AND MARKETING THROUGH LAND USE POLICY

by

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ABSTRACT

This research brings together concepts of sustainability, a local food system, and farm gate marketing. With these concepts, the research explores two scales of policy planning with regards to land use in Ontario, and answers the question: *In Southern Ontario, what is the impact of land use on a farmer's ability to sell at the farm gate?* Despite the seemingly simple and small-scale nature of a farmer selling his/her produce at their own farm gate, there is surprising complexity to the myriad policies that apply. The dynamic relationship between eaters, farmers, and planners presents particularly interesting challenges for planners in Southern Ontario. Understand the local food system and engaging in local food consumption begins to address larger issues of sustainability and farm viability. By providing farmers with opportunities, through land use planning policy, they are able to engage with eaters at the farm gate and accomplish place-making activities.

Key Words: Southern Ontario, agriculture, land use policy, farm gate market

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1.0 Introduction

“How planning operates to balance the need for an efficient food system with the goals of economic vitality, public health, ecological sustainability, social equity, and cultural diversity will present a formidable challenge to planners who engage in community and regional food planning, and in planning for various community sectors such as transportation, economic development and the environment (APA, 2000, n.p.).”

“... if we take seriously the intertwined issues of nutrition, health, local agriculture, food security for a growing population, and sustainability of the food supply, we ought to be very concerned with the place of food, and its place in our lives (Lister, 2007, p151).”

With the translation from the global imperative of sustainable “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p43), to the local come both opportunities and challenges. Issues such as urban sprawl, extreme weather, homelessness and biodiversity loss continue to present profound, continual and complex problems for urban planners (Robinson, 2009). Yet, across North America, one common individual response to the sustainability challenge is to try to localize their lifestyle. Increasingly, we are becoming more aware of the food we eat and how our eating habits impact the environment. With this awareness comes a renewed interest in: protecting the agricultural land upon which this food is grown, ensuring that the farmers who grow the food have sustainable livelihoods and increasing new opportunities for eaters to access fresh, locally grown products as close to home as possible. This increased demand for local food presents new opportunities for and challenges to current land use planning policies and ultimately for the planners responsible for their development and implementation.

This dynamic relationship between eaters, farmers and planners presents particularly interesting challenges for planners in Southern Ontario. This region is home to Ontario's

Greenbelt which spans 1.8 million acres of which 61 percent of the land is agricultural land with 7,100 farms that produce a wide range of agricultural products, from beef and poultry to peaches and pears (Di Poce, Goarley & Mausberg, 2009). Despite this area serving as the primary source of agricultural produce in Ontario, its farmers continue to face economic challenges, as Secombe (2007, p5) presents in *A Home-Grown Strategy for Ontario Agriculture* “[all] over the world, we see a dramatic loss of smaller farms while the remaining farms grow larger, more specialized, capital intensive and productive (in the narrow sense of lower costs per unit of output). The trend is very much in evidence in Ontario.” Within the Greenbelt area the largest farming category, at 27 percent of all farming operations (7100 farms in total), is ‘miscellaneous specialty crops’, consisting of niche market products such as maple syrup, honey, artisan cheese, gardening products such as flowers and plants, and lamb (Petrie, et al., 2008). These value-added products, which are in high demand by local eaters, have the potential to increase and expand farmers’ revenue stream *if* the local eaters can access these products.

Distribution of and access to local food has been a challenge in Southern Ontario despite “the agriculture and agri-food sector ... [growth] at an average rate of 2.4 per cent per year over the last decade” (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, in Carter-Whitney, 2008, p6). With approximately 78 percent of food distributed to the Canadian population through three supermarket retailers (e.g. Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys), local farmers whose crop type, consistency and volume are unable to meet the large scale needs of these stores are unable to sell their locally grown produce through standard distribution outlets. This “lack of [locally grown] products in convenient locations and the related lack of distribution channels inhibit farmers from gaining access to local customers” (Carter-Whitney, 2008). Farmers markets, agri-tourism, u-pick operations and farm gate sales have emerged as alternative food distribution mechanisms that bring the eater to the farmer and his/her produce. This increase in new food

procurement locales and opportunities has translated into active consumer participation in farmers' markets and farm gate sales which have the potential to increase the viability of agriculture in Southern Ontario. According to the Greenbelt Fresh, Fresh Food Finder (Greenbeltfresh.ca), within 400 kilometers of downtown Toronto there are approximately 112 farms with on-farm markets (Greenbelt Fresh, n.d.).

Yet preliminary research suggests that there are planning-related barriers inhibiting this potential (Britten, et al., 2009; Caldwell, 2006; Carter-Whitney, 2008). The existing land use planning framework in Southern Ontario, in many instances, serves as a barrier to innovative and non-traditional farming practices that have the potential to increase farm viability. To date, identification of and attention to these barriers has been limited to secondary uses, value-adding, severances, minimum farm parcel size, and minimum distance separation formulae (Britten, et al., 2009), and the scale of inquiry into these barriers has been limited to farmers markets and what is grown and raised on the farm. Thus far, research that considers the potential for farmers to make the farms more viable through farm gate sales remains largely unexplored.

The recent upswing of interest in sustainability and food security have brought to the attention of consumers globally the necessity of eating local and understanding where our food comes from. With consumer demand for local food increasing at a time when the economic viability of farming remains tenuous, farmers have begun to bring about innovative ways of marketing themselves and generating a secondary family farm income. However, as we scale down to the local food sector, the ability of farmers to sell their products at the farm gate is important to explore. And because the land use planning framework plays a significant role in defining what is possible on farms this study seeks to explore research and practice related to how farm practices and ultimately sales at the gate intersect with the planning process by

asking and answering the research question: ***In Southern Ontario, what is the impact of land use on a farmer's ability to sell at the farm gate?***

2.0 Methodology

A review and assessment of relevant literature and two scales of land use policy analysis, provides a more detailed and nuanced reflection of the potential opportunities and barriers when scaling down to the farm gate. The first step is to understand the interrelationships between sustainability, local food, and the farm gate; and how each of these themes are brought together for the purpose of creating viable farm gate sales at the local scale. To supplement the secondary research, a policy analysis will provide a comprehensive description of land use planning and the role land use planning has as we scale down to the local food sector, wherein by engaging the farm gate.

This research explores two scales of policy planning with regard to agricultural land use. Secondary literature review of relevant provincial and municipal land use policies informs this project, and through this research, as suggested by Neuman (2006) and Sofaer (1999), the interactions and complex settings of this project are brought together as an important part to address the values and language that are attributed to agricultural land use planning. This research approach provides the researcher with the opportunity to collect and analyze data, and create new concepts building on “prior research and contributes to a larger body of knowledge” (Neuman, 2006, p15). The purpose of the policy analysis, through the collection and analysis of data (e.g. land use policies), is to interpret the implications land use planning has on the local agricultural sector. An analysis of policies and practices in Ontario and a case study analysis of the County of Simcoe’s land use policies shed light on constraints that farmers face. The County of Simcoe is selected based upon its geographic location in Southern Ontario as well as the development pressures and desire to sustain agricultural areas in the region. These two scales of land use planning inform the constraints and limitations of farm gate sales at the local food sector.

At the culmination of this analysis recommendations are offered to farmers and planners. These recommendations are intended to illustrate the impacts of land use planning on a farmer's capacity to expand viability through farm gate sales.

3.0 Literature Review

The farm gate is a peculiar place at which to position a research project. At first consideration, efforts to understand how to provide farmers with new, creative ways to reach new customers whose purchases can provide added revenue to financially precarious small scale family farms seems like a relatively straightforward proposition. However, as this literature review will demonstrate, action at the farm gate requires an understanding of the intersection of research and practice related sustainability translated down to the local scale and it and requires a thoughtful and deliberate approach to growing local food. These issues will be explored in this literature review, and further supplemented in the Section 5.0 in which policy analysis is conducted on Ontario provincial and local land use planning policies. Ultimately the end goal of this research project is to offer recommendations to farmers and planners that elucidate the social, economic, natural and political challenges that farmers face when engaging in what seems to be a simple task: selling what they raise and grow at their own farm gate.

3.1 Sustainability

In Ontario, the planners' ability "to influence and inform policy is of direct relevance to the establishment and sustainability of regional food systems".

(Ontario Farmland Trust, n.d., p6)

Land use planning plays a crucial role in addressing sustainability, and incorporates multiple dimensions including: social, physical, and economic development (APA, 2000). The concept of sustainability when applied to land use planning requires the provision of economic opportunities for inhabitants, honouring society values and culture, protecting natural biodiversity, and the enhancing 'life-supporting services' provided by nature (APA, 2000).

The Bruntland Commission in 1987 prepared a report, *Our Common Future*, which addressed the principles of sustainable development, and defined it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p43). When strong economic growth was taking place in countries world-wide, people demanded better education, better living standards, and better health care; however these demands came at a cost to the environment. The increase in population resulted in a rise of pollution and over consumption of natural resources, inadvertently pursuing an unmanageable lifestyle; a large suburban home in a car dependant society, and the accessibility to international commodities and food, were consumed no matter the cost to the environment. As this continued, only later did we realize the environmental harm that was being caused.

The integration of sustainable development and planning involves three imperatives; the ecological/environmental, the social/community, and the economic (Dale, 2001; Robinson, 2009; Robinson, in-press). To address local sustainability issues, collaboration within Canadian and across other policy-making institutions (e.g. provincial, regional and local governments) will provide an understanding and framework to translate international scale sustainability issues at the local level. The practice of sustainability, as Moore (1997) suggests in Newman and Jennings (2008), depends upon the intersection of people’s physical, biological, social, and economic worlds, and most importantly the amalgamation of these four worlds. Understanding these limitations and desires will provide direction in which to address sustainability. Bringing us back to where we live and focusing on the local level will encourage and establish a foundation for sustainability (Newman & Jennings, 2008).

The rhetoric and practice of sustainable development has tended to concentrate at two simultaneous scales: the globe and the local (Brunyninckx, 2006). In Canada, the local is often

equated with urban and suburban patterns of human settlement. But what happens when the lens of sustainability is turned to the countryside? This approach to planning for sustainability and the reconciliation of the three imperatives should be considered for its impact and implications on family farms. The diverse activities that comprise local farming and local food consumption extend to include: the environment aspect, so food that can be grown in Ontario is not imported, therefore reducing environmental impacts; the social integration of growers and eaters when procurement focuses on local production; and the potential for improved economic viability for farmers as a larger population begins to eat locally and participate in agri-tourism activities. Local eater participation *should*, in practice, support a rural agricultural context, the viability of family farming, and the three imperatives in addressing sustainability. These data are not yet forthcoming because eating and interacting with local food is so new.

Scaling down from the global sustainable development imperative to the local food sector does not accommodate a 'one-size-fits-all' solution to address sustainability (Kruger & Williams, n.d.; Newman & Jennings, 2008). The connection people attribute to a place and the study of "addressing natural resource issues are receiving increased attention from academics, policymakers, and citizens" (Cheng, Kruger & Daniels, 2003, p88). Although the definition of sustainable development is not complex, "there is no general agreement on how the concept should be translated into practice. While there is no question that the concept is increasingly being used to guide planning, its implementation is not immediately apparent" (Berke & Conroy, 2000, p22). Each landscape and bioregion varies, and sustainability actions and interventions must recognize the unique characteristics of each place and should function within natural system constraints, as opportunities and challenges differ between these regions due to social, economic, political and ecological factors (Berke & Conroy, 2000; Cheng, Kruger & Daniels, 2003). The ability to provide unique and place-appropriate interventions will enhance the diversity of the landscape, produce, and commodities and increase the potential of these

interventions to actually be successful (Robinson, 2009). When growers engage in agricultural practices that are strongly connected to a place, they are making a departure from industrial scale, mono-crop agriculture. This migration to a local scale production and consumption of food presents the opportunity to capitalize upon unrealized opportunities for farmers to attract the eater to the farm or to bring the farm's bounty to the eater, including through farm gate sales. At a local level, empowering community members, "to build community ... build relationships and trust ... engage in mutual learning ... raise awareness of and mitigate conflict ... plan holistically ... and incorporate a broader range of meaning into planning" (Kruger & Williams, n.d., p86), should expand the capacity of a broader urban-suburban-rural community (or the foodshed) to sustain a rural agricultural culture and an agri-tourism industry (Lister, 2007). Developing farm gate sales builds relationships and trust between growers and eaters, while providing an understanding of where their food comes from. These scaled down acts of bottom-up empowerment begin to address sustainability and initiate a locally-based holistic approach to the global challenge of sustainable development.

Planners need to recognize that food system operations – a series of processes in food production, including: growing, harvesting, washing, packaging, marketing, waste recovery, and the consumption of the product – are fundamental to efforts to respond to sustainability because they require a considerable amount of urban and rural land that contributes to our economy (American Planning Association, 2007; Kaufman & Bailkey, 2000). There are multiple links between the food system, sustainability, and planning activities, including economic development, land use and transportation, community health concerns, sustainability, cultural diversity, and social equity, these food policies "typically focus on urban agriculture, community gardens, farmers markets, emergency food distribution, food retail access, local food economies, and management of organic waste (Bradley & Mendes, 2005, p14). These policies can support our economy, health, communities, and environment (Bradley & Mendes, 2005). As

planners look for ways to intervene and confront sustainability, focusing broader issues of land use planning and rural sustainability at the local level can engage stakeholders. Initiating a dialogue between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, farmers, and planners, will start the process of achieving agricultural goals and addressing sustainability issues (Baeker, 2008, Seccombe, 2007). Public engagement between a variety of stakeholders, surrounding rural agriculture, sustainability issues, and local food, scales planning down to a local level, specifically addressing agricultural processes and the viability of farming in Southern Ontario. These processes and an understanding of food system operations can begin to address and balance the consumption of land for agricultural and planning activities, while addressing the broader issues of sustainability. Scaling down to the local level through a “food systems” lens is one approach that may sustain a local food sector while providing nutritious food to members of the community. This approach to the food system holds value for family farms and provides the ability to undertake these processes on agricultural lands in order to supply eaters with produce.

Land preservation and land use policies surrounding agricultural areas can provide farmers with the opportunity to diversify and sustain an economically viable farming operation. Encouraging local consumption through policy, not only begins to address local food initiatives, but also keeps local capital in the community, and sustains a viable economic cycle. Local community involvement and grower-eater interactions can be supported through policy and scaling down to the local food sector. The process of scaling down to local land use planning in the agricultural sector begins to address broader issues of sustainability.

Awareness surrounding sustainability has begun to refocus our priorities to a local food sector. The land use planning policies, such as the Greenbelt Plan (Province of Ontario, 2005), that protect agricultural lands has provided society with not only with these local food

opportunities but also with the preservation of a rural community culture and family farming industries, while addressing broader scale sustainability issues.

3.2 Local Food

As we begin to address sustainability, our sustainable future in our communities will be influenced by local food and the agricultural sector. With an increase in water scarcity, rising fuel costs, and climate change, a local viable agricultural sector and appreciation of food, will begin to shift our scale of focus to the local food level, while addressing broader issues of sustainability (Ontario Farmland Trust, n.d.). With a heightened appreciation for food and eater awareness, scaling down will provide access to healthy food and begin to advocate a change in Ontario's food system. The larger global food context "stresses equitable access to food for all people, regardless of income or location" (Dietitians of Canada 2007; Metcalfe Foundation, 2008, p33). As published by the Dietitians of Canada (2007) and Ontario Farmland Trust (n.d.), the Canadian Community Health Survey reported that 15 percent of Canadians were residing in food-insecure households. With the availability of agricultural resources in Southern Ontario and Canada, there should not be such a large percentage of the population with an unbalanced consumption of healthy food. Providing Canadians with nutritious local food begins to address issues surrounding food accessibility at the local and global level.

There are a variety of mechanisms for the delivery of food, such as supermarkets, food banks, food pantries, farmers' markets, and food box programs; however, the sale of local food to eaters can also take place through farm gate stands. Locally grown produce is fresher than food that has been shipped from another part of the world. This locally grown produce will last longer as it has not ripened while being shipped to a delivery outlet, such as a supermarket retailer (e.g. Loblaws, Metro and Sobeys). To address the delivery of nutritious local food, the

City of Toronto amongst other municipalities, including the County of Simcoe, have developed civic policies, such as food box programs, school food programs, and farmers' markets, to provide food secure communities (Donald, 2009; Ontario Public Health Association, n.d.). However, it is difficult to provide healthy food and achieve food secure communities due to income inequities, land use planning, and zoning bylaws (Johnston and Baker, 2005), leading to unhealthy eating patterns amongst the less affluent. Strategically locating food banks and food pantries (agencies that are responsible for distributing emergency healthy food in urban areas), could help alleviate unhealthy eating patterns. In the urban fabric, there are areas where within walking distance it is nearly impossible to find a grocery store, this inadvertently leads to what Lister (2007, p170) describes as 'food deserts', a lack of access to nutritious food resulting in the consumption of fast-food or unhealthy foods. To improve these inequalities, zoning and land use planning need to emphasize supermarket, food bank, and food pantry locations based upon the population in need (Britten, et al., 2009). Local growers are capable of providing health food to these delivery mechanisms reaching a broader consumer market.

Providing accessible venues to local food, reduces the distance food has to travel to reach the eaters' plate. The reduced travel of produce or processed food supports sustainability initiatives as the processes consume less energy. The removal of the 'middle man', such as a manufacturer, shipper, or retailer, allows farmers to engage in a dialogue and comprehend what eaters want, as well as retain a larger revenue from their agricultural products. Additionally, the consumption of local food supports farmers and growers and the local economy. A viable agricultural sector and family farm provides the opportunity for growers to reinvest in their local economy. When the financial aspect of farming remains in the community, it helps to support agri-tourism and the local agricultural community.

There are increasingly becoming more opportunities for eaters to purchase local food from smaller and specialty agro-food producers in the urban and rural environment. Scaling down to local food production and consumption, as Hinrichs (2003) discusses, can play an important role in the preservation of agricultural land and local specialty food production, while addressing food security. The intention is to focus again on long-term access to locally grown food and to support our local economies (Allen, 1999; Hultine, Cooperband, Curry & Gasteyer, 2007). Farm gate stands provide a venue for farmers to sell their locally grown produce and value-added commodities to local eaters, who in return can identify where their food is coming from. This process “seeks to re-link production and consumption with the goal of ensuring both an adequate and accessible food supply in both the present and the future” (Allen, 1999, p117). In addition to selling local produce, the encouragement of farm gate consumerism could provide a venue for growers to sell their specialty or niche products, such as jam or preservatives, while providing the eater with local food that may not be in season, and additional income to the family farm. This approach to consumerism provides the unique experience many local eaters look for and are unable to attain at large scale supermarket retailers; thus addressing the local food scale and supporting the agro-food productions of local growers.

3.3 Farm gates: Next frontier for eaters & growers

The shift from a grocery retailer environment to the farmers’ market to a local scale farm gate market requires a conscious effort by eaters to support local growers and the local food system. The Project for Public Spaces organization describes the process of growing and marketing local food as a “dynamic human function ... an act of liberation, of staking claim, and of beautification; it is true human empowerment” (Project for Public Spaces, 2009). This process provides a setting to connect growers and eaters in the rural agricultural context.

The rural planning, agri-tourism, and farm gate market frameworks provide eaters with the opportunity to access healthy local food. Connecting eaters to the farm through a variety of avenues, as they engage in agri-tourism activities, provides them with the opportunity to gain a sense of place and develop a connection with the farm and the food they eat (Donald, 2009; Kruger & Williams, n.d.; Lister, 2007). As this transpires, interplay between the local food system, a healthy lifestyle, and an eater alternative plays out. As a society we have begun to focus on the rural and agricultural planning systems and the importance of food systems, while realizing the importance of “meaning and values people ascribe to places and the emotions, experiences, benefits, and satisfaction people experience in places” (Galliano & Loeffler, in Kruger & Williams, n.d., p84). These considerations for local planning can be incorporated into farm gate markets and the rural environment through land use planning policies.

The integration of agriculture and sustainability can be addressed through a scaled down local food system. A holistic approach to agricultural land use planning incorporates sustainability, community, and economy. Flexibility in local land use policies in Ontario would allow for farming practices, such as farm gate sales and “bolster the local food economy” (Wegener, 2009, p47). According to the *Greenbelt Agriculture: A Breakdown of Agricultural Facts and Figures in the Greenbelt* paper (2008), located in the Greenbelt are approximately 100 on-farm markets (Petrie, et al., 2008). These secondary and agri-tourism uses, including farm gate markets, pick-your-own operations, and corn mazes not only bring the consumer and community together as they begin to share a future around food security, it also economically benefits local farmers and farm families, (Carter-Whitney, 2008; Feagan, et al., 2004; Lyson & Guptil, 2004; Petrie, et al., 2008; Urban Food Distribution Systems, n.d.).

It is important to maintain a rural agricultural community in Ontario in order to support a viable economy for growers and countryside communities. Smithers & Johnson (2004) argue

that family farming is a social and economic unit consisting of a relationship between the farm household and farm business and maintains that the changes in farming requires “forming new contact points between agriculture and community and perhaps in sustaining old ones” (Smithers & Johnson, 2004, pp192-93). Through a local food system in the rural agricultural context, the introduction of ‘contact points’ as relationships between family farming, culture, eaters, and the farm gate, can begin to change farming. That being said, without these contact points and a supported agricultural industry, there is the possibility of major implications on rural communities, that include, the well-being of the rural residents, the rural environment, the ability to sustain a viable local food production, and the cultural and social capabilities. If citizens and eaters support the local food sector, not only will it sustain the agricultural market, it will furthermore initiate a variety of agri-tourism activities.

In the rural agricultural landscape there are a variety of food based consumer activities that take place, these include, farmers’ markets, farm gate sales, accommodations, dining opportunities, and other agricultural related farming practices, that can be initiated to enhance and maintain rural culture. As an economic development strategy, farmers’ markets, farm gate stands, accommodations, dining opportunities, and other agri-tourism discoveries, have begun to attract urbanites and off-farm rural residents to the rural landscape (Donald, 2009; Lister, 2007). According to Donald (2009) and Lister (2007), these new tourist destinations, including Niagara Region and Prince Edward County, provide the rural experience non-rural residents desire. These tourist destinations can be found “[within] two hundred kilometers in either direction of Toronto ... each offering a mapped route of rural agricultural discovery, with accommodation, dining, and plentiful opportunities to purchase food products directly from farm stands and town markets” (Lister, 2007, p179).

The local food system essentially begins with reconnecting food to place (Feagan, et al., 2004). Farmers' markets and farm gate sales (or market stands) allow the consumer to interact with the farmer, and understand where their food is coming from; while the farmer is able to capture more of their commodities value (Feagan, et al., 2004). The method of farm gate sales, commonly found along roadways with a high volume of traffic, used by farmers allows them to directly access the customer (Urban Food Distribution Systems, n.d.). In some instances land use planning restrictions and a lack of subsidiary resources impede the development of farm gate sales. The absence of guidance in provincial, regional, and municipal documents pertaining to policy and framework guidelines, for rural farm gate marketing, is juxtaposed with a flourishing and cultivating urban agricultural market. Food and farm innovation, sustainability, food security, and economic development in Southern Ontario, are impeded through land use planning issues and themes: secondary uses, value-adding, severances, minimum farm parcel size, and minimum distance separation formulae. To address these issues, non-government and non-profit organizations, such as Project for Public Spaces, activists, and the grass-roots community, begin to call attention to on the ground land use planning issues. And, in Section 5.0 of this paper, these issues will be addressed in the specific jurisdictional context of Ontario in general and County of Simcoe in particular.

There are several purposes to originating farm gate stands, these include: an established and trusted relationship between the grower and eater, a venue for growers to sell their produce and agricultural commodities without having to travel to markets or deliver to stores, a second viable economic contributor to the family farm, involvement in the overall rural culture, and the ability to address issues surrounding food security while providing produce to local citizens (O'Neil, n.d.). A study conducted by Project for Public Spaces regarding the impacts farmers' markets have in revitalizing a space, determined that bringing community

members together was the top priority of marketers (Fried, n.d.); this positive response presents the ability to make markets self-sustaining where there is a sense of community.

Growers who sell directly to clients through markets “love what they are doing, and most enjoy sharing this love with their customers” (Urban Food Distribution Systems, n.d., n.p.). The sale of produce through farmers’ markets, while providing farmers the satisfaction of supplying fresh produce, it does not present an opportunity for growers to engage eaters in the agricultural environment and farming operations. This sense of accomplishment can also be translated to the farm gate with the ability to show eaters farming operations, fresh produce, and the agricultural community. Farm gate stands provides, a unique environment to eaters, the opportunity to beautify the farm, and the ability to re-connect the grower and eater. Urban Food Distribution (n.d.) says that customers who buy directly from the farm are special; they appreciate freshness, quality of seasonal produce, and learning about how their food is produced and from where it comes. The eater supports the local family farm, farming heritage, and the local agricultural community. As eaters are introduced to the farm gate, they are partaking in a variety of activities that directly impact local food initiatives, sustainability, a rural culture, and the viability of farming.

3.4 Conclusion

As we begin to pay closer attention to the rural agricultural system with a specific focus on food systems and the roles that planners, growers, and eaters play, society is able to shift in their role in supporting and ultimately sustaining a rural culture and a local agricultural food economy. Understanding these contributing factors pertaining to sustainability, a shift to the local food system, and farm gate sales, through land use planning will ground the overall thematic ideas and realistically bring together policy and a local food system at the farm gate. A

holistic approach to planning will provide the most suitable environment to support an agricultural community and farm gate sales.

For this case, and as will be discussed further, the County of Simcoe, located in Southern Ontario in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, depicts a primarily agricultural landscape and is governed by two scales of land use policy. Looking at the local food system and land use planning through one lens can change rural planning into a holistic localized planning approach.

4.0 Policy Analysis

Despite the seemingly simple and small-scale nature of a farmer selling his/her produce at their own farm gate, there is surprising complexity to the myriad policies that apply. Accordingly this chapter employs a policy analysis approach to evaluate the impacts of land use planning at the provincial and regional level on the sale of local food at the farm gate. The interpretation and implementation of policies at the regional and municipal levels direct development, growth, and land preservation, among other functions. The agriculturally-specific policy within each region has *the potential* to support agri-tourism activities and help sustain a rural agricultural community. Yet when, as the policy analysis conducted in this chapter when coupled with the municipality-specific case study will reveal, this potential is not always realized. In the discussion that follows each scale of land use planning will review the objectives of provincial and regional planning departments and demonstrate how they are implemented on the ground in the case of the County of Simcoe.

4.1 Land Use Planning Issues

In the fall of 2009, graduate students, including this author, in the Master's of Urban Development Programme at Ryerson University engaged in a yearlong exploration of food and farm innovation in Southern Ontario (Britten, et al., 2009). One series of findings from this research revealed that there are five land use planning issues that impact on-farm innovation: secondary uses, value-adding, severances, minimum farm parcel size, and minimum distance separation formulae. When these issues are not duly considered for their impact on small scale farming practice they serve as barriers to efforts by these farmers to address issues of sustainability, new local food provision, food security, and the viability of farming in Southern Ontario.

Addressing land use planning in Southern Ontario delineates how the five issues are interrelated; secondary uses and value-adding are interrelated; so are severances, minimum farm parcel size, and the use of minimum distance separation formulae. In an agricultural area creating a value-added commodity as a secondary use to the primary operation of the farm, may require a zoning bylaw amendment. The interrelationship between these land use planning issues exists, as secondary uses and value-adding activities are generally implemented to sustain a rural agricultural community with the intention of attracting more eaters to the farm gate, diversifying the family farm, and creating an economically viable farm operation (Britten, et al., 2009). Further to this, two parcels of land that have been severed for the use of a residential/retirement lot must meet the minimum farm parcel size. In regards to new residential development, to mitigate conflict the distance separation formulae are enforced to prevent residential development from encroaching on productive agricultural lands.

The scope of this preliminary research was limited to considering impact on the entire farm parcel. Farmers interested in farm gate sales have the opportunity to provide a value-added commodity to eaters and thus assessing the impact of these five issues at this smaller scale is warranted. As such, growers continue to look for new ways to diversify their farm, by catering to the eaters rising demands surrounding a renewed interest in local food, a sustainable agricultural sector, food security, and the connection between the eater-grower-farm operations, while sustaining a rural agricultural community. Through the two scales of land use policy will be elaborated upon through a hierarchical outline. The plans and policies governing agricultural areas influence the opportunities for growers on the farm and at the farm gate.

4.2 Ontario Land Use Planning Hierarchy

The Ontario planning structure is a top-down land use planning process (see Figure 1) with planning priorities for regional and local government being set by the Province. The set of land use planning tools used in Ontario includes: the *Ontario Planning Act*, the Provincial Policy Statement, *Places to Grow Act*, the *Greenbelt Act*, upper-tier and lower-tier official municipal plans, secondary plans, zoning bylaws, and the committee of adjustment.

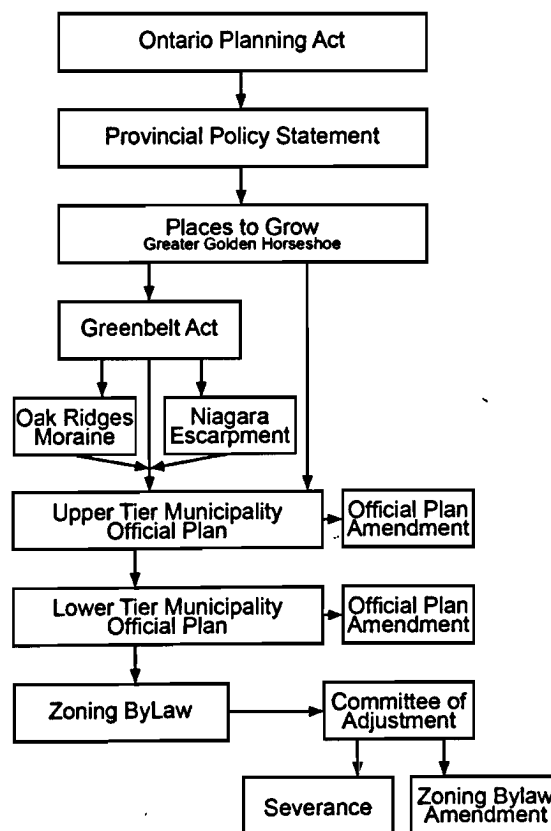


Figure 1: Top-Down Ontario Planning Structure (Britten, et al., 2009, p43 [modified])

4.2.a Planning Act

This upper-tier of the top-down planning process is intended to regulate land use planning in Ontario at a broad level. As this process unfolds, all policies, provincial and regional must comply with this *Act*. The purpose of the *Planning Act* is

to promote sustainable economic development in a healthy natural environment
... provide for a land use planning system led by provincial policy ... integrate matters of provincial interest in provincial and municipal planning decisions ... provide for planning processes that are fair by making them open, accessible, timely and efficient ... encourage co-operation and co-ordination among various interests ... [and] recognize the decision-making authority and accountability of municipal councils in planning (*Planning Act*, 1990, n.p.).

The *Planning Act* prepares the law for provincial plans, such as the *Places to Grow* and *Greenbelt Plan*, as well as regional and municipal official plans. The *Act* empowers regional and local levels of government to develop official plans that, at a minimum, to engage in sustainable development while providing a healthy environment for its citizens. Agricultural land preservation is a provincial interest and as such this *Act* guides the Provincial Policy Statement, the *Places to Grow Act*, and the *Greenbelt Act*, enabling land use planning policies.

4.2.b Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) supports provincial goals, provides the policy foundation utilized in regulating land use planning and development, while enhancing the quality of life for Ontario residents (Province of Ontario, 2005b). The Provincial Policy Statement “provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and

development and promotes the provincial 'policy-led' planning system" (Province of Ontario, 2005b, p2). Implementation of the PPS takes place through planning documents, such as the official plans and local zoning bylaws. Under Section 3 of the *Planning Act*, the *Act* ensures that the policies and objectives in the PPS are achieved in the decision making process (Province of Ontario, 2009).

Section 2.3 of the Provincial Policy Statement outlines agricultural land use policies. The PPS states that in regards to prime agricultural areas, lands "shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture" and that specialty crop areas "shall be given the highest priority for protection" (Province of Ontario, 2009, p17). The policy further outlines permitted uses and activities in regards to prime agricultural areas, and the use of the minimum distance separation formulae for "[new] land uses, including the creation of lots, and new or expanding livestock facilities" (Province of Ontario, 2009, p17). The PPS also elaborates upon lot creation and lot adjustments (Section 2.3.4) in prime agricultural areas and the policies regulating the removal of land from prime agricultural areas (Section 2.3.5) (Province of Ontario, 2009).

4.2.c Places to Grow Act - Greater Golden Horseshoe

In 2005 the *Places to Grow Act*, was implemented in Southern Ontario (Province of Ontario, 2006). The role of the *Places to Grow Act* is to direct and manage growth throughout the region while building stronger communities; it does not replace upper- or lower-tier municipal land use plans, as these municipalities are required to conform to the *Act* (Province of Ontario, 2006). Municipalities with areas that are classified as prime agricultural, as according to the *Act*, "are encouraged to maintain, improve and provide opportunities for farm-related infrastructure such as drainage and irrigation" (Province of Ontario, 2006, p31). This *Act* is intended to guide decision making on a variety of issues, including infrastructure planning, land use planning,

transportation, urban form, housing, resource and natural heritage protection (Province of Ontario, 2006).

4.2.d Greenbelt Act

Building upon the *Places to Grow Act*, the *Greenbelt Act* enables the formation of the Greenbelt Plan, which incorporates the broader objectives of the *Places to Grow Act* in Southern Ontario. However, not all the lands within the *Places to Grow Act* are included in the Greenbelt Plan, although those that are have stricter planning policies (Province of Ontario, 2005). This Plan identifies agricultural land base for protection, and “where urbanization should not occur” (Province of Ontario, 2005, p3). Further identifying specific lands building upon the ecological protection, the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan were developed (Province of Ontario, 2005). The goals of the Greenbelt Plan are:

To enhance our urban and rural areas and overall quality of life by promoting the following matters within the Protected Countryside:

1. Agricultural Protection
2. Environmental Protection
3. Culture, Recreation and Tourism
4. Settlement Areas
5. Infrastructure and Natural Resources

(Province of Ontario, 2005, p5-6)

The Greenbelt Plan is derived under the authority of the *Greenbelt Act, 2005*, allowing “the Lieutenant Governor in Council, by regulation, to designate an area of land as the

Greenbelt Area” as well as the ability “to establish a Greenbelt Plan for all or part of the Greenbelt Area” (Province of Ontario, 2005, p6). As outlined in the Greenbelt Plan, prime agricultural areas include Class 1, 2, and 3 soils, and include “areas of prime agricultural lands and associated Canada Land Inventory Class 4-7 soils; and additional areas where there is a local concentration of farms which exhibit characteristics of ongoing agriculture” (Province of Ontario, 2005b). Permitted uses in prime agricultural areas include; agricultural, normal farm practices (as defined in the *Farming and Food Protection Act, 1998*), agriculture-related, and secondary uses (Province of Ontario, 2005). According to policy, 3.1.3.2 of the Greenbelt Plan, municipal official plans are not permitted to re-designate agricultural lands for uses other than the refinement to a rural area, a prime agricultural designation, or the expansion of a settlement area (Province of Ontario, 2005, p14). Additionally, the minimum distance separation formulae, that appears in the Provincial Policy Statement (Province of Ontario, 2005b, p6) is applicable where new lots, zoned for another use, are created or with the expansion of livestock facilities (Province of Ontario, 2005, p14). These formulae are used to calculate the permitted distance between parcels of land zoned for livestock facilities and new residential developments. This approach to land designation and planning helps alleviate nuisance complaints and land use conflicts.

There are two land parcels in the Greenbelt Plan area that are classified as prime agricultural areas, they are the Niagara Peninsula Tender Fruit and Grape Area, and the Holland Marsh (part of which is located in the County of Simcoe), and both are governed by a specific ‘specialty crop area’ policy (Province of Ontario, 2005). The primary difference between the specialty crop area policy and the rural area policy, as outlined in the Greenbelt Plan, is the inability to expand the boundaries of settlement areas whereas in prime agricultural areas redesignation of lands is only permitted for refinement to the present are designations, subject

to the Greenbelt Plan policy 5.2, and for the use of settlement areas, subject to Greenbelt Plan policy 3.4 (Province of Ontario, 2005).

As well as the protection of agricultural lands, the Plan also considers the future of the rural environment and economy, including recreation, tourism, institutional and commercial/industrial uses (Province of Ontario, 2005, p14). The support of tourism and recreational uses needs to be reflected in municipal planning documents and allow growers to diversify their farming industries and capitalize on their farm operations. Although rural development is supported, and permits location-specific expansion, much of it takes place in settlement areas (Province of Ontario, 2005, p14). These areas are rural and urban, hamlets, villages, cities, and towns, in a municipality, where there is mixed land use and concentrated development, and according to the PPS lands that have been designated for development are present (Province of Ontario, 2005, p53).

As aforementioned, those lands that are not located in the Greenbelt Plan area but are within the Greater Golden Horseshoe still remain important, and are governed by the *Ontario Planning Act*, Provincial Policy Statement, and *Places to Grow Act* (Province of Ontario, 2005). Generally those lands located within the Greenbelt Plan area are subject to stricter planning policies than those outside. The GGH is focused on growth within the region, although its policies do recognize the importance of protecting agricultural lands for the future and sustaining a sustainable, diverse, and productive farming industry.

4.2.e Upper-Tier and Lower-Tier Municipal Official Plans

An upper-tier municipality may either be represented as a region or county, and is governed by an official plan. Subsequently, within these regions a city, town, or township is presided over by a lower-tier official plan. These official plans are can be implemented through,

secondary plans, zoning bylaws, variances and consents, site plans and building permits. Similarly, single-tier municipalities provide the aforementioned services within the municipality.

An official plan is a master policy plan, typically with a twenty year implementation period, that is enforced in all municipalities; however this plan is not a statute. The official plan is governed by the top-down land use planning structure, and therefore Part III of the *Planning Act* and all policies within the official plan "shall be consistent with" the PPS. The official plan does not restrict land uses and must be implemented through zoning bylaws to be effective, where all zoning bylaws must conform to the official plan. An official plan may be amended by a municipality or private entity and requires a full public participation process, including notice, public meetings and an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), however in order to appeal to the OMB you must have taken part in the public process.

The official plan varies by each region and municipality, as does the importance that is placed on rural lands, agricultural areas and farming. Land designations in the official plan describe what uses are and are not permitted in a particular area. As provincial policy and official plans are reviewed the opportunity to include flexibility for non-traditional farming operations should be included. Traditionally these policy documents describe agriculture in a more traditional way and are not inclusive of new generations of growers. It is important to preserve agricultural lands as well as support a viable agricultural sector for farmers.

4.2.f Zoning Bylaw

As stated above, in the Ontario top-down land use planning process, a zoning bylaw interprets the official plan on a site-by-site basis, and is a legally binding land use planning method. A zoning bylaw prohibits all uses except those specifically permitted in the bylaw. Farmlands are executed through bylaws and these bylaws determine what activities can take

place on the property. Generally in Ontario, the bylaw zones plots of land and assigns permitted uses to each zone, as well as restrictions on height and density. This method establishes performance standards with regard to noise, dust, odour, environmental impacts, and surrounding activities. Amendments can be initiated by a municipality or a private entity, and similar to an official plan amendment, minimum standards for public consultation are prescribed by the *Planning Act*.

At a local scale, zoning bylaws are particularly “important to the viability of on-farm processing and marketing” (Ontario Farmland Trust, n.d., p14). According to Caldwell (2006), the viability of secondary uses, including farm stands, value-added commodities, and farm tourism, is dependent on identifying permitted uses, these may include: fencing, signage, landscaping, secondary structures, and parking.

In the aforementioned study of on-farm innovation (Britten, et al., 2009), demonstrated the lack of conformity between municipalities and regions resulting in a variety of policy interpretations and land use planning outcomes (Britten, et al., 2009). As the agricultural land use policies in the Provincial Policy Statement are broad, this grants the opportunity for the regional and municipal levels of government to comprehend policies individually. This top-down land use planning framework is subjective at the regional official plan level, as each region is capable of designating the significance of agricultural land use planning within their policies. Background research demonstrated that provincial policy documents are “all encompassing whereas the regional and municipal official plans and policies are often restrictive, preventing farmers from taking part in innovative practices” (Britten, et al., 2009, p45), leading to inconsistent farming regulations between regions. The difference between regions and municipalities, demonstrated by those who have successfully integrated agricultural land use and permissive policies permitting on-farm innovation, affords growers the ability to diversity and

generate a secondary income on the farm, and likewise, those policies that are not as permissive inhibit growers' abilities.

4.3 Public Health Policy

For the purpose of value-added commodities and on-farm secondary uses, there must be consideration for public health regulations as well as land use planning policies. Land use planning policies govern what is permitted on property, however the public health regulations will govern what can and cannot be sold to the customer as a raw product or a value-added commodity.

There exist individual federal, provincial, and regional regulations that govern food inspection and agricultural regulations. The federal government regulations cover the *Health of Animals Act*, *Consumer Packing and Labeling Act*, *Food and Drugs Act*, and *The Canada Agriculture Products Act*, and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Regulations, amongst others. Provincial Regulations include, *Pesticides Act*, *Milk Act*, *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, *Livestock and Livestock Product Act*, *Food Safety and Quality Act*, and so forth. Municipal Regulations, although they have a minor role, include, Health Units (inform the public about healthy lifestyle choices), zoning and planning issues, and Farmers' Markets. The Municipal regulations may include information regarding what can and cannot be sold and who can sell the product.

4.4 The County of Simcoe

Rural land use planning encompasses a variety of objectives to address goals surrounding sustainability, local food systems, and a viable rural agricultural culture (Province of Ontario, 2005; Smithers & Johnson, 2004; van Lier, 1998). Throughout history, institutional

structures, such as Ontario's land use planning policies, have directed farmland and rural agricultural uses. The policies have been reflective of the present political agenda surrounding farmland and agricultural use and protection, and have evolved over time as a reflection of politics and power structures, social norms, recreation and resource management, and food security (Feitelson, 1999). Although these institutionalized notions of agricultural land and practice may vary, the governing policies often take considerable time to mobilize and respond to the contemporary reality, and "consciousness at the grassroots level is [often] the first step toward effecting change" (Feitelson, 1999; Wolff, 2003, p44). Present planning policies have focused development on rural lands where less productive agricultural soil is located.

Contrasting this, are lands with higher quality soil that are preserved for agricultural practices and protected from large scale development. These planning policies including the Greater Golden Horseshoe plan area and the Greenbelt Plan area were established in response to development and urban sprawl encroaching on agricultural lands. These policies were initiated because of stakeholder, politician, grower, eater, and activist concern regarding agricultural lands and local food production. Farmers have been selling their land to developers and using the money for their retirement. The sale of their land provided a higher return, than the production and sale of agricultural produce and commodities. As stakeholders realized this was happening, it was necessary to place restrictions on land use so as to sustain a viable agricultural culture and local food production. Without these land use planning policies it is likely that unprotected agricultural lands would have continued to be used for development and urban sprawl, and not support the objectives and goals of rural land use planning.

As we begin to understand the components of sustainability, the local food system, and farm gate sales, establishing the research in a 'real' place where agri-tourism is relevant, will bring the components of land use planning at the local level forward. This approach will ground

the research and help facilitate discussion around a place. For the context of this research, the County of Simcoe presents a case study region that is undergoing land use changes while maintaining their agricultural areas and sustaining the rural agricultural culture.

4.4.a Overview

The County of Simcoe is located in the Greater Golden Horseshoe in Southern Ontario. This region is bound by Georgian Bay to the north, the district of City of Kawartha Lakes to the east, the Region of York and the Region of Peel to the south, and the County of Dufferin and County of Grey to the west (see Figure 2). Although geographically located in the County of Simcoe, the City of Barrie and the City of Orillia are governed by single-tier official plans. In 2006, the County was home to 422,204 residents and 2,402 farms, accounting for 4.2 percent of Ontario's total farm area (Statistics Canada, 2006).

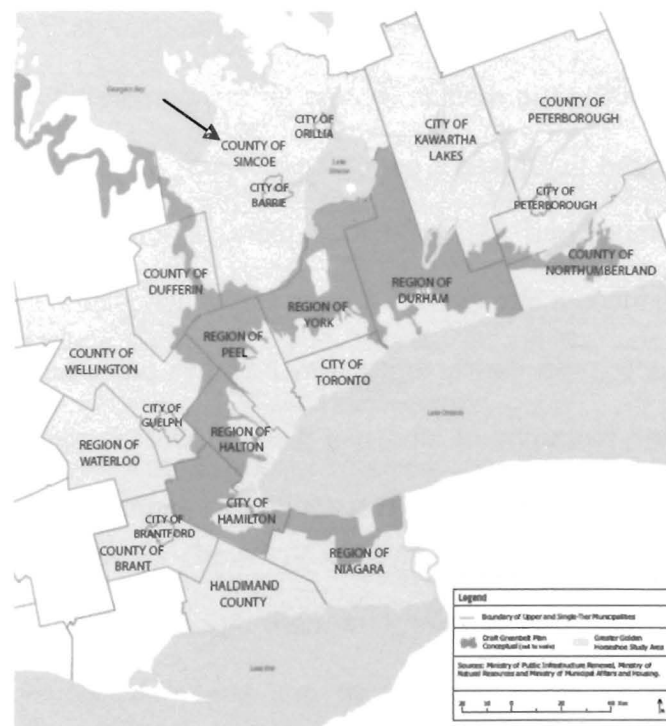


Figure 2: Map of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Province of Ontario, 2006, Schedule 1)

Ontario's aging population is reflected in the farm population, where in 2006 Ontario's population age 65 and over accounted for 13.6 percent, and the same cohort in the farm population made up 12.1 percent of the population; this was an increase of 5 percent from 1971 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Specifically, in the County of Simcoe, there were more than 9,800 persons employed by the agricultural sector, and the most prevalent farming industries in 2006 were cattle, dairy, grain, and nursery (Statistics Canada, 2006). However between the years of 2001 and 2006, there has been a decline of 0.36 percent in the census farm employment rate, and a decline of 1.3 percent in the total area of farms (Statistics Canada, 2006). According to Statistics Canada (2006), the family farm income throughout a calendar year, includes sources such as; salary and wages, net non-farm self-employment income, net farm income, investment income, government transfer payments, other money income and retirement pensions; for all family persons over the age of 15. In 2006, while 9,115 families maintained incorporated farms, 45,690 Ontario farm families carried on as unincorporated farms, 7.4 percent less than in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2006). The median income for unincorporated Ontario family farms in 2005 was \$63,910, compared to Ontario's general population at \$69,155 (Statistics Canada, 2006). These statistics demonstrate the need to explore opportunities that have the potential to increase family farm income and provide a more viable agricultural sector. Agriculturally-related and agri-tourism practices for family farms may hold this potential yet, as the previous section illustrated, the nested hierarchy of land use plans in Ontario signal the need to explore this potential in a real planning jurisdiction in order to inform a scaled down understanding of opportunities and barriers for local growers.

4.4.b Policy Framework Governing the County of Simcoe

The County of Simcoe, as previously stated, is located in Southern Ontario in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, as designated by the *Places to Grow Act*. While this overarching

Plan guides decision making surrounding a variety of land use planning and development issues, Places to Grow prepared *A Strategic Vision for Growth* in the County of Simcoe in June of 2009 (Province of Ontario, 2009b; Province of Ontario, 2006). This Strategic Vision (see Figure 3) was prepared to manage growth as a result of the enormous development pressures in the County of Simcoe (Province of Ontario, 2009b). The vision provided priority area and guidelines to ensure a long-term sustainable growth (Province of Ontario, 2009b).



Figure 3: Map of the County of Simcoe (Province of Ontario, 2009, p3)

The *Simcoe Area: Strategic Vision for Growth* (2009b) paper, builds on the *Places to Grow Act* and the Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan, and promotes long-term sustainable growth through “protecting the valuable farmland and recreational areas upon which the area’s agricultural and tourism industries depend” (Province of Ontario, 2009b, p2). As Section 3.5 of the paper focuses on the importance of preserving rural assets and reducing sprawl (Province of Ontario, 2009b, p22); focusing growth in built-up nodes and around municipal serviced areas

will can help protect agricultural lands and the natural environment (see Figure 4). Of the land base in the County, nearly half is agricultural, and as the agricultural industry remains vibrant in the County (Province of Ontario, 2009b), long-term preservation of the lands requires that infrastructure and development remains focused away from these areas.

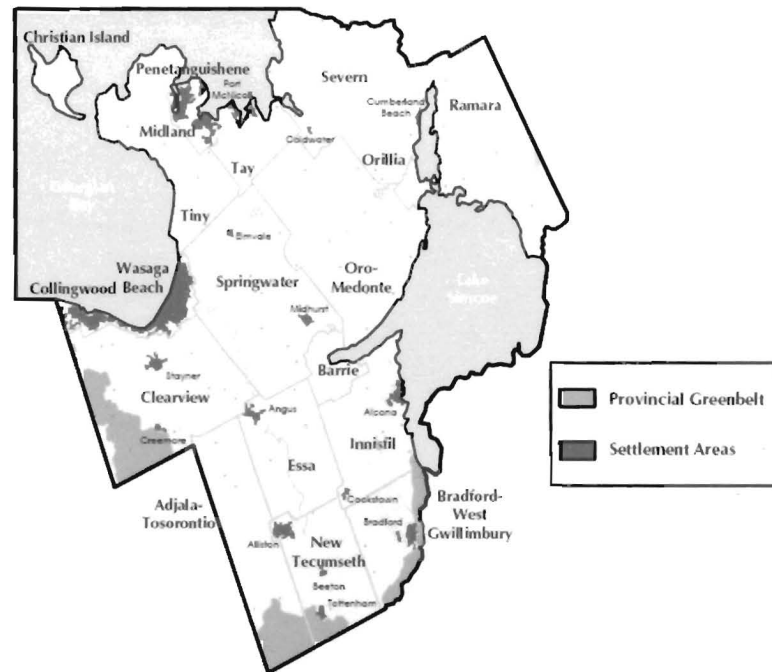


Figure 4: Settlement Areas as those shown in the Built Boundary for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Hemson Consulting Ltd., 2008, p2)

Southern and western lands in the County make up part of the Greenbelt Plan area as well as, the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act* area, the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act* area, and the Holland Marsh area (see Figure 5).



Figure 5: Map of the Greenbelt Plan Area (Province of Ontario, 2005, Schedule 1)

The Greenbelt Plan further highlights the protection of the agricultural land base in Southern Ontario, and identifies where urbanization should or should not occur (Province of Ontario, 2005). The Plan also incorporates the future of the rural environment and economy, including agricultural related uses. Specific areas in the County of Simcoe have land in each of the four categorized areas; the Greenbelt Plan area, the Oak Ridges Moraine area, the Niagara Escarpment area, and the Holland Marsh. For each of these land base areas there are specific land use planning guidelines that the county must adhere to and incorporate in their Official Plan and zoning bylaw documents. Specialty crop areas, are those areas where soils are capable of producing specialty crops or where land is exposed to special climatic conditions, and/or the combination of capital investment and growers skills (Province of Ontario, 2005b), are included in the Niagara Escarpment and the Holland Marsh areas. These two land masses are governed by a speciality crop area policy that; promotes the use of land for agricultural, agricultural related, normal farm practices, and secondary uses; prevents redesignation of agricultural to non-agricultural lands except where stated in the Greenbelt Plan policy; prevents the expansion

of hamlets, towns and villages into specialty crop areas; and compliance with the minimum distance separation formulae must apply to new land uses (Province of Ontario, 2005, p13).

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan has a diverse ecosystem and “unique concentrations of environmental, geological and hydrological features” (Province of Ontario, 2001, p2). These documents are essential in the protection of the ecosystem and provide smart growth. The key elements outlined in the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan are focused on a long-term strategy, to manage growth providing strong communities and a healthy environment (Province of Ontario, 2001). Designations within the Oak Ridges Moraine Plan Area include, Natural Core Areas, Natural Linkage Areas, Countryside Areas, and Settlement Areas. Each of the four subject areas are defined by their ecological features and identify specific land uses accordingly. For the purpose of agricultural and agricultural related uses; the Natural Core Areas and Natural Linkage Areas permit agricultural uses, home businesses, home industries, and bed and breakfast establishments; and Countryside Areas permit agricultural related uses, small-scale industrial, commercial, and institutional uses except in prime agricultural areas, in addition to those permitted in Natural Core and Linkage Areas.

The land located in the GGH and outside of the Greenbelt Plan area remain important agricultural, rural, and settlement areas, and continue to be governed by the aforementioned provincial policies. Municipal planning documents, such as the official plan and zoning bylaws, reflect the provincial mandates with which land use planning policy shall be consistent. To promote farm viability, these regional land use planning documents need to be permissive, visionary and flexible in order to encourage farmers to diversify their farming activities and ultimately, viability.

The County of Simcoe's Official Plan (OP) must comply with the Greenbelt Plan, as well as the aforementioned provincial documents. The goals of the County's OP are:

- protect, conserve, and enhance the County's natural and cultural heritage;
- wise management and use of the County's resources;
- growth management to achieve lifestyle quality and efficient and cost-effective municipal servicing, development and land use;
- achievement of coordinated land use planning among the County's local municipalities and with neighbouring counties, district, regions, and separated cities, and First Nations lands;
- ▪ community economic *development* which promotes economic sustainability in Simcoe County communities, providing employment and business opportunities;
- protect public health and safety.

(County of Simcoe, 2007, p2)

The County's OP does not place a large emphasis on agricultural lands or farmland preservation (County of Simcoe, 2007). Simcoe's agricultural objectives include the protection of prime agricultural lands and areas, and the associated natural heritage functions and features as required in the Greenbelt Plan (County of Simcoe, 2008). Additionally, the County is conscious of the ability of their agricultural land and strives to maintain "non-prime agricultural areas for rural uses such as resource activity, recreation and limited residential, subject to the other policies of this Plan ... while protecting the *rural* character and the viability of existing agricultural operations" (County of Simcoe, 2008, p18). This policy encourages: a healthy food market, a local food system with support for growers; and the retention of prime agricultural

lands for the purpose of farming. That being said, not all agricultural development is initiated at the regional land use planning level.

Official plans are not the only way for agricultural operations and future agricultural practices to take place at the regional level, as advancement for preservation, agricultural on-farm diversification, and agri-tourism operations, has also begun from non-government or grass-root organized farming associations, such as Simcoe County Farm Fresh Marketing Association. This association was formed in 2005 as a grass-roots organization and in 2007 became a non-profit organization (Simcoe County Farm Fresh, n.d.). The association has a variety of stakeholders and is comprised of farmers' markets, growers, community partners, and restaurants (Britten, et al., 2009). Their focus is "on marketing to raise awareness on locally grown food through various farmers' markets and specialty niche markets located on several farms within the county" (Britten, et al., 2009, p34). The particular activities can energize a rural culture and encourage agri-tourism operations, and the sale of local food at the farm gate. Further to this, these initiatives are capable of addressing sustainability and local food security, while ensuring proper nutrition and healthy local food be provided to the community. These non-policy lead activities can stimulate discussion around land use policies and offer recommendations to the future revision of policy documents.

The County of Simcoe was selected for this case study as it is representative of other municipalities in the Greenbelt. The development pressures, particularly surrounding the City of Barrie, the crop diversity, the unique specialty crop areas (including Holland Marsh), and the activity from agri-tourism (see Figure 6), affect multiple municipalities in the Greenbelt. The activity through the Simcoe County Farm Fresh Marketing Association is comprehensive of other associations and provides a benchmark for other municipalities. The activity around a health community environment and the initial engagement with eaters are substantive actions.

4.5 Conclusion

The recent interest in sustainability and localizing the growing and eating of our food has instigated a shift in allowing consumers to eat locally and understand from where their food comes. The aforementioned land use planning policies and implications for the farm gate sales require growers and planners to approach new and 'non-traditional' farming practices and food delivery methods at a scaled down approach. In order to meet the consumer demands, local food growers are beginning to create innovative marketing methods. These new methods, such as farm gate sales, bring a secondary income to the family farm, whereby growers are able to sell their produce and value-added products directly to the eaters.

- As demonstrated the two scales of land use policy protects agricultural areas, and prime agricultural areas for the purpose of agricultural practices. However, the new and innovative approaches to farming and marketing at the local level can be impeded by land use policy. The impact of land use on a farmer's ability to sell at the farm gate not only impedes the farm viability, but also inhibits the ability to address broader issues surrounding sustainability and scaling down to sustain a local food system.

5.0 Recommendations

It is interesting to note that while Ontario has an internationally recognized 'best practice' framework for protecting the land upon which agricultural activities take place (Carter-Whitney & Esakin, 2010), from these same land use policies come impacts and outcomes that impede the very new and innovative approaches the farmers of this land need for a sustainable livelihood. The impact of land use planning on a farmer's ability to sell at the farm gate not only impedes the farm viability, but also inhibits the ability to address broader issues surrounding sustainability and scaling down to sustain a local food system.

In the Greenbelt Plan area, approximately 52 percent of farms (3675 farms) are less than 70 acres in size, where only 2 percent of the farms are greater than 1,120 acres; the largest percentage of small farms are in the Niagara Region (Di Poce, Goarley & Mausberg, 2009). Smaller farm sizes likely reflect the variety of commodities grown, and "are typically more intensively farmed, and have a higher value of production per acre than large farms", as they are more focused on manual labour and value-added processing (Di Poce, Goarley & Mausberg, 2009, p12). According to the Greenbelt Fresh, Fresh Food Finder (Greenbeltfresh.ca), within 400 kilometers of downtown Toronto there are approximately 112 farms with on-farm markets (Greenbelt Fresh, n.d.) thus demonstrating farmers' interest in this type of on-farm activity yet also revealing the small uptake – only 3 percent of small farms use this distribution technique. The notion of selling food locally not only begins to address issues surrounding sustainability and maintaining a rural culture, it also provides the reintegration of creating a meaningful place at the farm gate.

Advances with technology, farming practices, and consumer demands, have increased the number of larger scale farms. In Ontario between 1981 and 2006 there was a significant

increase in farm sizes by 65 percent, from 180 acres to 232 acres (Di Poce, Goarley & Mausberg, 2009). Smaller farmers must compete with these larger scale farms and their preferential economies of scale. To maintain their competitive edge, smaller farms need to consider engaging in value-added practices, agri-tourism, and marketing methods, such as farm gate markets. To support small scale farming, the two scales of land use policy need to incorporate appropriate policies to permit innovative and new farming operations and commodity sales.

In the section that follows recommendations are offered that seek to bridge the divide between the intention of the policy and practical realities faced by farmers in Southern Ontario. Recommendations are directed to planners that will provide guidance in terms of land use policy, as provincial and regional amendments are made to official documents. Secondly, recommendations and suggestions are offered for farmers in hopes of creating a farm gate market. These recommendations establish a framework for creating a successful farm gate market while understanding and balancing land use planning policy barriers.

5.1 Recommendations Directed to Planners working for the Province of Ontario and Regional Municipalities

As previously mentioned, the provincial and regional land use planning policies address agricultural areas, lands, and practices. However the all encompassing approach to the provincial regulations provides the opportunity for local municipalities to interpret agricultural land use planning within their own jurisdiction.

The preservation of agricultural lands is important and helps sustain agriculture practices and a local food system. However, as Wallace, in Smithers and Johnson (2004, p192) explains

that “[the] highly productive farms that dominate Canada’s agricultural system are increasingly linked with agribusiness, government (through agricultural policy and programmes) and financial institutions for their markets and critical inputs”. The “well documented shift to more industrialised forms of food production” (Smithers and Johnson, 2004, p192), requires that planning policies need to be comprehensive and recognize this shift in the agricultural market, providing a more inclusive approach to agricultural planning, where smaller farming business are capable to specialize in smaller and specialty crop and commodity production. This may include, a change to the minimum farm parcel size, permitting uses of innovative technology, the permission of agri-tourism operations (such as a farm gate stand), and the use of secondary buildings for farming operations or market sales.

With the plentiful agricultural resources in Ontario, the Province can begin to address the larger global issue of sustainability through a scaled down food system. The opportunity to provide food to the provinces residents should be explored by the Province to determine what the food providing capacity is within the province. Margaret Walton in *Neptis Foundation Issue Paper No. 1: Agriculture in the Central Ontario Zone*, states that “[as] part of the creation of federal or provincial policy on agriculture, there needs to be a review of what is grown where, what can be grown where, how much needs to be grown to satisfy the populations needs, and what strategy is required to achieve stated goals” (2003, pp19-20). Reducing the international importation of food will help support local farming viability, the agricultural community, and the health of Ontarians. To understand the needs of farmers, local authorities should establish a democratic forum allowing for an open dialogue between the province and region, so that they have the opportunity to engage with the farming community. This would also provide guidance and an understanding of on-the-ground land use planning for farming operations.

Agricultural land use planning needs to go beyond the protection of agricultural land. Land use planning policies need to be inclusive of operations and activities that can take place on the agricultural land, enabling farmer diversity and viability. Furthermore, there needs to be a comprehensive understanding of what is impeding farm viability in Southern Ontario, scaling down to municipal planning and the farm gate.

5.2 Planner Recommendations (Municipal)

To provide a favourable environment for growers to engage in on-farm marketing (farm gate sales) local government planning departments need to provide policies and frameworks that address all aspects of farm productions and farm gate stands. According to the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (2004), these may include: permitted retail activities (including the type of enterprises that can take place, the overall square footage that is allowed, and the permitted hours of operation); farm festivals (which sometimes includes an entertainment aspect); and, issues surrounding modes of transportation and parking (with eaters travelling to the farm gates there is a substantial increase in traffic, frequently it is up to the farmer to provide off-road parking). With an increase in technology and mobile equipment, and an increase in specialty crop production (such as organic farming) specific requirements must be satisfied in order to grow or farm the produce or commodity. For instance this may include the specific use of loud equipment, which increases the noise level on the farm impacting the surrounding areas, or utilizing additional lighting in order to employ crop production, farm gate sales, and/or security. Planning policies, such as official plans and zoning bylaws, at the local level presently does not incorporate each of these on-farm practices and factors. While the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries in British Columbia recognizes their importance however this does not necessarily translate to land use planning in British Columbia or Ontario.

Caldwell in Ontario Farmland Trust (n.d.) presents the notion of Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Associations analysis of agri-tourism and direct marketing operations and how they are affected by planning practices. According to the analysis, direct marketing operations have been growing, although there still remains many planning-related concerns, including, "ease of access (parking and traffic) ... on-farm food safety and client safety ... food preparation standards ... septic and building permits ... permission to sell produce from nearby farms ... fire code ... commercial or industrial zoning ... [and] insurance costs" (Ontario Farmland Trust, n.d., p29). Specifically, issues pertaining to farm gate stands can include: signage (consisting of the details of size, colour, location), parking (whether on-farm or off road, determining where the responsibility lies in supplying the land), traffic circulation in and out of the farm (with a higher volume of traffic issues pertaining to roadway access and the maintenance of the roadways becomes an additional responsibility), permits for buildings (including buildings for ancillary on-farm uses), additional provision of sewer and water (to supply the new on-farm uses), hours of operation, taxation (with additional uses on farm the taxation may not necessarily remain the same), and health and safety (for the employees and visitors to the farm). As discussed above, present land use planning restrictions has the possibility of making it difficult for farmers to initiate secondary uses on-farm.

While these policies need to be in place for on-farm operations, additional policies for the implementation of farm gate stands also need to be addressed. Without specific policies for these on-farm markets, each case becomes place specific and subjective to a bylaw amendment and/or the committee of adjustment. When on-farm market processes and applications become daunting for farmers, it is likely that they will decide to not pursue these activities. To alleviate the subjectivity and unnecessary applications, planners need to incorporate these policies in planning documents. By addressing these issues through more

forward-looking policy frameworks, small rural local governments are also reducing the amount of time and money required to issue bylaw violations and to process policy amendment requests.

In order to address and understand these issues planners need to engage in a dialogue with farmers to understand what needs to transpire on the farm in order to participate in direct farm marketing. This dialogue will provide farmers with the opportunity to explain the processes and for planners to understand and direct existing policy and plan for future agricultural policy to accommodate this shift in the local food market. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, inter-departmental dialogue at the local level will also assist in improving issues such as: transportation, parking, lighting, and noise. In the recommendations for future research section this issue will be explored further.

5.3 Farmer Recommendations (Current Practice)

The difficulty for many farmers when setting up these secondary operations is determining what the land use planning policies include and how permissive or restrictive they are. Providing farmers with more flexibility and assessing each situation on a case per case basis would allow the rural communities and family farms to diversify and generate additional family farm income.

The implementation of secondary uses and value-adding commodities can contribute to the economic viability of a farm while connecting local consumers with the farmer. One way of introducing this type of procurement is through place-making activities in the rural agricultural context, which stimulates farm gate sales. This place-based approach has been applied to farmers markets (Fried, n.d.; Project for Public Spaces, 2009) but it has not yet been scaled

down to the farm gate. The opportunities provided through farm gate sales extend to include the interaction between growers and eaters, and eaters and farming operations. Providing a venue for eaters to understand where their food comes from will help sustain farm gate marketing. Additionally, this business venture provides efficient methods of marketing and direct sales. Providing a farm gate market diminishes the travel time for growers, the environmental impact of travelling to a farmers market or shipping to a supermarket, and the cost incurred with selling the produce and commodities at farmers' markets and food supply stores.

Prior to establishing a farm gate market and determining the price, produce, or value-added product that will be sold, farmers need to understand consumer demand and react accordingly. An understanding of the agricultural community, the eaters, and tourists who frequent a particular community, will provide an origin from which to service the eater market. One option is to engage in a dialogue with eaters, local farmers, and farming associations to understand what eaters want, whether experience or the food they consume. It is recommended that this data be collected by local governments, so it is representative of the specific community and can be incorporated in cultural plans and land use policies. Further to this a database an organization, such as Friends of the Greenbelt, would be able to accumulate this data and present it to the public providing additional data from across a larger land mass.

Creating a self-sustaining market or farm gate market, can be dependent upon the commodity that is being sold. Providing a niche commodity would likely attract a specific clientele, and provided the commodity is not widely available it is anticipated that these customers would return. This is not to say that the sale of raw products is less desirable, but with the frequency and availability of these products, it could be unlikely that urban consumers would travel to the rural farm gate for such products. Researching the market and finding a niche product or unique avenue for marketing can encourage a successful and profitable farm

gate stand. The intimate and unique farm gate or commodity attributes will provide an opportunity for the diversification and single representation of the family farm. That being said, it is important for the grower to understand the value of the produce or value-added commodity. In order to sell the product it must be competitively priced while still generating income, furthermore the sale of bulk commodities may actually generate more income than the sale of the same individually offered product. Prior to initiating direct grower-eater sales, the farmer should research and establish profitable pricing for their products.

For the present agricultural framework and in the future, beginning to look at place-making and land use planning through one lens can change rural planning into a holistic localized planning approach. These localized planning initiatives have increased the number of inter-disciplinary firms and teams that may include, governments, agencies, activist groups, non-governmental and non-profit groups, stakeholders and community members who interact at the local level (Kruger & Williams, n.d.). Continuing this dialogue will offer the opportunity for farmers and farming associations to demonstrate how land use planning impacts their needs and wants. These actions incorporate place-based planning practices, including community involvement through public consultation, workshops, and charrettes. Public engagement and stakeholder meetings, provide a venue for open a dialogue in regards to their community, what they need in order to live, work and play in a place, and how they characterize their rural agricultural culture. This approach to planning provides professionals, such as planners, architects, and politicians, the ability to structure an environment in which citizens take pride. This inter-disciplinary team is then able to collaboratively provide planning expertise for the community.

5.4 Future Research Recommendations

The future of farm gate markets relies on farmer initiation and response to eater demand. The creation of a farm gate stand can be interpreted through a place-making lens. The concept of place-making is to create an environment or space that is based upon the setting and surrounding qualities of the area. Place-making is the act of staking claim (Project for Public Spaces, 2009), while beautifying the interaction between eaters and growers. The sense of farmers' empowerment and liberation, which comes from place-making activities, may extend to include the farming operations, raw and value-added products, the farm gate market stand, and the act of creating a 'place' that reflects the farm environment and connects each of these components and the consumer. The creation of meaningful places is derived through a site specific environment and surrounding, establishing a farm gate capitalizes on these particular attributes. For instance, dependent upon what product the farmer would like to sell at their farm gate, the commodity will be unique and differ between communities and farms. Family farms may perceive place-making as the beautification of their farm property, the sale of raw or value-added agricultural products, the scale of the farming operation, the physical environment and setting, or even crop diversity; however, the concept of place-making is that each individual, or each farm, is capable of creating a meaningful 'place' characterized by the farms attributes. Accordingly, there are a variety of agri-tourism operations that can be improved through place-making concepts.

Rural agricultural place-making activities can encompass a broad range of stakeholders. Throughout the rural context there are a number of farms that may wish to undertake place-making to create a unique 'place' for eaters and clients. Each of these agri-tourism activities contributes to sustaining the overall rural culture; however distinction must be made between the roles of the individual farmer and the broader community involvement. Determining what the farmer is responsible for, such as their farm gate and the maintenance surrounding their farming

operations, versus the overall responsibilities within the community, will begin to tie together agri-tourism in the rural culture. For instance, within the community establishing a committee or coordinator can help to organize agri-tourism events, tours, promotions and campaigns, they may act as a liaison between other communities, and even provide research support for local institutions and city staff (Ontario Farmland Trust, n.d.). All of these steps will help to develop a viable regional food system through the promotion of each individual farmer's agri-tourist attraction.

Bringing the community and consumers closer together is not necessarily as simple as assembling a stand along a rural road at the entry of the farm. Tactful marketing and community involvement will help to develop a rural culture and environment, and has the potential to attract more urban and rural consumers. In Southern Ontario, the Greenbelt Plan encourages tourism and agri-tourism throughout the Plan area. The Plan supports permanent agricultural protection, and "also contains important natural resources and supports a wide range of recreational and tourism uses, areas and opportunities together with a vibrant and evolving agricultural and rural economy" (Province of Ontario, 2005, p4). This Plan also supports farming viability and "social activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses" (Province of Ontario, 2005, p4). The support provided through the Greenbelt Plan as a destination for agricultural tourism can encourage farmers, eaters, and tourists to frequent destinations such as the County of Simcoe and farm gate markets. Agri-tourism is intended to attract urban and rural residents to the farm. According to the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, the top ten places (see Figure 6) that consumers will travel from to engage in activities throughout the County of Simcoe include: Toronto, York Region, Simcoe Region, Peel Region, Durham Region, Halton Region, Muskoka District, Haliburton County, Waterloo Region, and Hamilton-Wentworth Region. While typically agri-tourism is marketed to residents who reside within a few

hours of the farm, visitors do partake in same-day and overnight trips, and/or include travel to the farm as part of a larger travel itinerary.

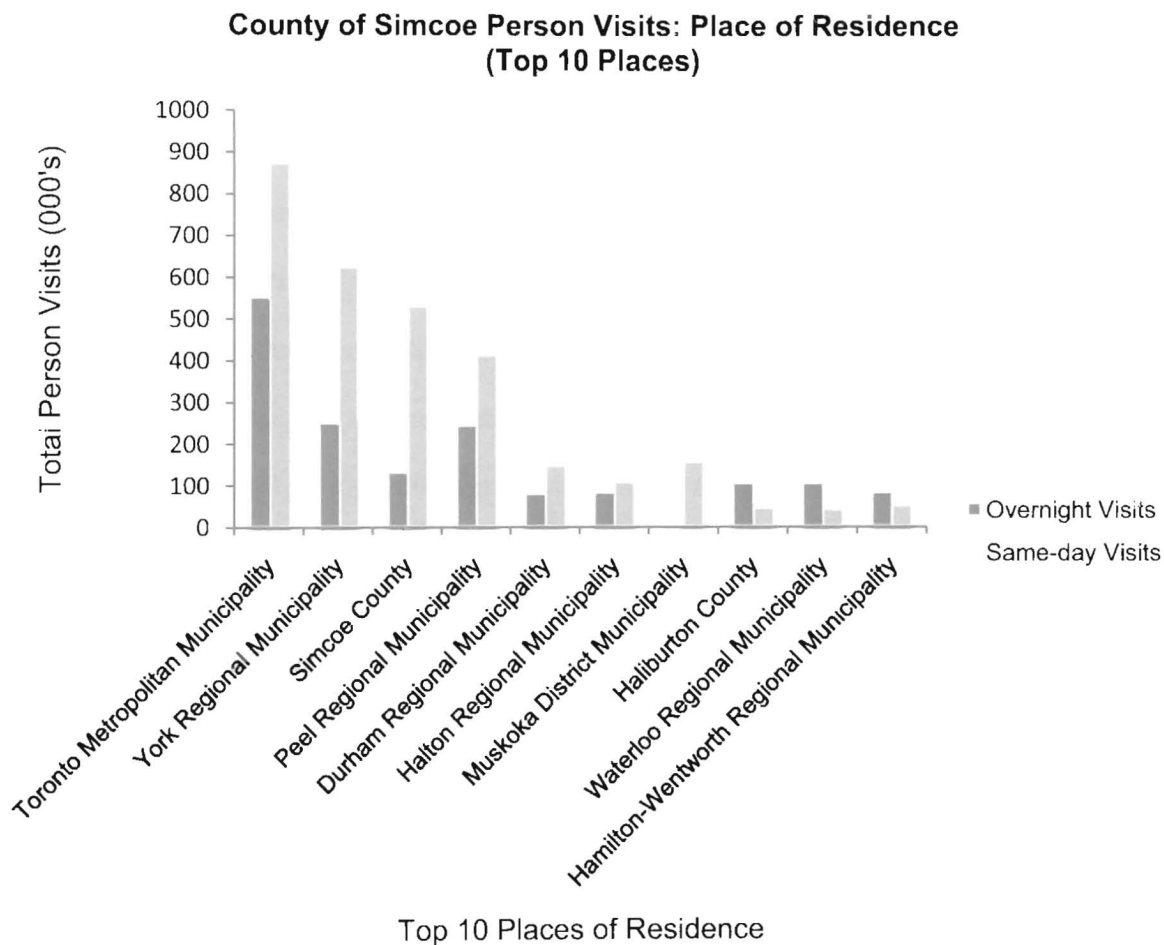


Figure 6: County of Simcoe Person Visits (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, n.d.)

In rural settlements and farming environments, involvement from the farming community will increase the opportunities for eater-grower relationships. Not all farms need to sell raw or value-added commodities, but the opportunity exists, since more and more eaters want to understand what they are consuming and where it is coming from. This increases the opportunity for a viable agri-tourism market. In Prince Edward County and the Region of Niagara, they have marketed themselves as an agri-tourism destination providing culinary, wine, accommodations,

and agricultural activity experiences (Baeker, 2008; Donald, 2009; Lister, 2007). Although this exact model would not necessarily work in every rural community, the principle behind their marketing and the opportunity to introduce people to agriculture exists across Southern Ontario. For instance in Price Edward County in 2005 the municipality prepared the *Leveraging Growth and Managing Change: Prince Edward County Strategic Cultural Plan* (The Corporate Research Group, 2005). The plan recognizes the unique characteristics of Prince Edward County and comprehends that “[municipal] cultural planning is a place-based approach to local and regional cultural development” (Baeker, 2008, p10). Cultural mapping of “physical (or tangible) cultural resources ... [and] ‘intangible cultural resources’ – the unique stories, traditions, values, perceptions of place, and quality of life that define a community’s unique identity and sense of place” (Baeker, 2008, p10). This approach to forming a rural culture and agricultural community can be applied in many communities; these unique pockets throughout the rural fabric contribute to an overall uniqueness of Southern Ontario’s agricultural sector.

The origin of this study was to facilitate, through land use planning, place-making activities at the farm gate. The two scales of policies, the provincial/regional and the municipal, have an active role to play in regulation land use agricultural planning, but planners need to determine how to animate the farming community further. Through the place-making planning lens, planners need to determine what can be done to help farmer’s better design and plan their farm gate stands. Where appropriate policy standards should exist for farm gate stands. Planners need to engage with farmers to understand what farmers want to be able to do but cannot and what creative inventions can take place to stimulate farm gate sales. It was originally the intention to answer these questions, however as this research evolved it became apparent that land use policies impact the farmer’s ability to sell at the farm gate. The aforementioned recommendations are intended to direct new land use policy, and provide the opportunity to engage place-making activities at the farm gate.

The Project for Public Spaces organization encourages place-making and provides workshops to encourage a dialect and understanding of a specific venue and what makes it unique. Planning a venue or gathering place to cater to the public is one of the most important factors in creating a public space and farm gate market. Despite the reasons why customers return, whether is it for impromptu conversations, the opportunity to see other people, or the unexpected sensory delights, there must be a reason why they originally started frequenting the venue, market, or farm (O'Neil, n.d.). The consumers return can likely be attributed to the meaningful places created at farm gates as their unique qualities build upon the farms characteristics and key attributes. People attribute meaning and value to places, and as such, consumers associate their experiences, emotions, and satisfaction to their occurrence at the farm gate.

According to the Projects for Public Spaces article, there are ten overarching qualities that comprise a successful market. O'Neil (n.d.) suggests that the qualities of the market include the appearance, cleanliness, innovation, location, and service, as important factors. Secondly, the accessibility of the market, including parking, adjacencies, and scale are all important when creating and maintaining a rural culture. When developing or enhancing a culture, adjacencies, for instance between farms, can encourage repeat customers. These market qualities can be interpreted for the implementation at the farm gate. Using these qualities will enhance the public realm and provide an inviting experience for the eater-grower interaction.

Determining how the distribution of this information will take place and how it can be interpreted for farmers' use while providing recommendations around farm gate markets should be further explored. The process of implementing value-added and agricultural secondary uses on the farm is an important contributor to the viability of farm gate markets and family farming.

This research could provide farmers with a substantive approach to the creation of farm gates through the negotiation of land use planning policy. In consideration of the feasibility to maintain farm gate markets and other agri-tourism practices in the rural context, consumers need to frequent the facilities. Although not addressed in this research marketing methods must also be intertwined with place-making in order to host a viable agri-tourism industry.

This study brings together research and practice in land use planning and agriculture, however future research should take place to investigate the role planners have, how place-making at the farm gate can enhance the public realm and opportunities for farmers, and the opportunity to understand what implications or difficulties farmers face when implementing farm gate sales. As this research illustrates, planners have an active role to play in regulation land use agricultural planning, but how can planners animate the farming community further? What can be done to help farmer's better design and plan their farm gate stands through place-making planning? Do policy standards for farm gate stands exist, and if so, what do farmers want to be able to do but cannot and what creative inventions can take place to stimulate farm gate sales? To address these research questions, an open dialogue and interviews with farmers to understand what their needs are when developing and operating farm gate stands would assist planners in developing policies pertaining to farm gate marketing.

5.5 Conclusion

An amalgamation of resources and research has presented recommendations and considerations for the farm industry and planners to incorporate place-making while creating a meaningful and viable marketing method for farmers. Understanding the role land use planning has and how it is interpreted for farmers has guided the recommendations. This process is

significant for planners and farmers as meaning-creating and place-making is itself planning (Kruger & Williams, n.d.).

6.0 Conclusion

With the recent interest in sustainability and food security, it has been brought to the attention of eaters globally the necessity of eating local and understanding where our food comes from. To address the rising consumer demand for local food, farmers have begun to bring about innovative ways of marketing themselves. However, demonstrated through this research, as we scale down to the local food sector land use planning that inhibits on-farm operations and the sale of products at the farm gate can prevent the opportunity to creating meaningful places at the farm gate.

The role of provincial land use planning in Southern Ontario is to protect agricultural lands. Without these policies, urbanization and sprawl would have consumed a greater amount of agricultural area than what has already taken place. That being said, in some situations, land use policy can be seen as an inhibitor to farming, innovation and agri-tourism practices. The 'smaller scale' and local land use issues, including, secondary uses, value-adding, severances, minimum farm parcel size, and minimum distance separation formulae, have the ability to impede the agri-tourism industry. Without the flexibility for farmers to produce and market raw and value-added products, the farmer is unable to gain the maximum economic viability with their farm.

The limited number of farmers engaging in farm gate sales (3 percent) suggests that restrictions may inhibit their ability to engage in such activities. This research demonstrated land use planning policy barriers in the local food economy do exist, but further research interviewing farmers will help to understand the extent to which these barriers are real. That being said, research on the creative rural economy shows that innovation can be restricted when policy barriers exist, this eater-food experience in the rural economy is an intimate interaction "we eat

it and therefore how we eat it has implications for a host of policy related issues around job creation, health, hunger, ecosystem protection, carbon footprint, labour practices, cultural awareness and diversity" (Donald, 2009, p25). The recommendations to promote the rural economy and local food system provide guidance for both levels of government, the provincial/regional and the municipal, as well as farmers today and in the future. Supporting the opportunity for farmers to engage in farm gate marketing, provides growers and surrounding community members with the opportunity to enhance their own agri-tourism operation. Place-making and meaning-creating is about providing a sense of community, a space of place that empowers people, builds and engages the community, provides mutual learning, raises awareness, and builds trusting relationships (Kruger & Williams, n.d.). Farm gate markets have the ability to create these environments through place-making activities, as well as enhance the public and community realm.

7.0 References

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