

# Acknowledging Our Support

Thank you to the many individuals and organizations whose input, ideas and vision have been invaluable in shaping this plan

## Steering Committee Members

Ballantyne, Cam, Local Resident  
Baynham, Bob, Headwaters Health Care Centre  
Borden, Bob, Upper Grand District School Board  
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Greenwood, Holly, Independent Consultant  
Horvath, Barbara, Independent Consultant  
Long, Margaret, Community Resident  
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Rayburn, Cynthia, Orangeville Police  
Rice, Rob, GDA Chamber of Commerce

Steering Committee members are also community volunteers & participants

## 2004 Founding Members

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Scott, Elaine, WDG Public Health Unit  
Shaw, Jim, Grand Valley & District Lions Club  
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Wilhelm, Mary, Homewood

2004 Founding members are also committee members & participants

## Community Volunteers & Participants

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Wilson, Bill, Humber Valley Heritage Trail  
Wood, Tim, Credit Valley Conservation Authority  
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## Consulting Support

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Cheuy, Sylvia, Consultants  
Greenwood, Holly, Consultants



Building A Better Quality of Life Together

# Making It Happen: A Community Action Plan for Social Prosperity

Photo Credit: John Lawson

## Embracing a New and Unique Approach

The Headwaters region has a long and proud history of community action and commitment. **Headwaters Communities in Action**, a broad based community action group, provides the opportunity to do this work in a fundamentally new way. The group is committed to building on previous initiatives while working together to ensure our region thrives. The answers to our most complex issues and challenges cannot be solved with "quick-fix" solutions. No single sector can be effective in addressing these issues in isolation. Fragmented thinking and action will only produce fragmented, partial solutions. New, innovative and comprehensive ways of working together must be found in order to strategically impact the quality-of-life for residents in our region.

**Headwaters Communities in Action** has been created to drive a process for community change in partnership with existing community organizations and the citizens of our region. Our project will be a catalyst while needed initiatives take root.

### Quality of Life CHALLENGE:

#### Fostering Engagement, Collaboration and Inclusion

"A vibrant community is one with strong relationships. Studies have shown that connecting people with each other enhances their ability to talk about and address community issues, and together overcome barriers to improve the quality of their lives. Well-connected communities are more resilient. They have greater capacity to assess problems, nurture leaders, build stronger organizations and mobilize resources."

... Caledon Institute for Social Policy



# Who Are We and What Are We Trying To Do?

**Headwaters Communities in Action** is committed to ensuring the best quality-of-life for those who live and work in the Headwaters Region – in and around Dufferin County. This will be accomplished by strengthening our community's ability to foster a culture of engagement, inclusion and collaboration. This cultural shift is required in order to build sustainable social prosperity for our community. Our mandate is fulfilled by:

- engaging individuals and organizations throughout the Headwaters area in sharing their ideas and perspectives about what is needed to enhance social prosperity
- facilitating opportunities for diverse sectors to work together
- supporting mobilization around goals, identified by the community, to achieve a shared vision of social prosperity

The project was launched in November 2004 when community leaders across diverse sectors came together

to talk about our region's current realities and to develop a shared vision for the future. The 54 participants at this founding meeting were energized by having the diversity of perspectives brought together to plan. By the end of the day, a shared vision emerged:

## Our Vision for Social Prosperity

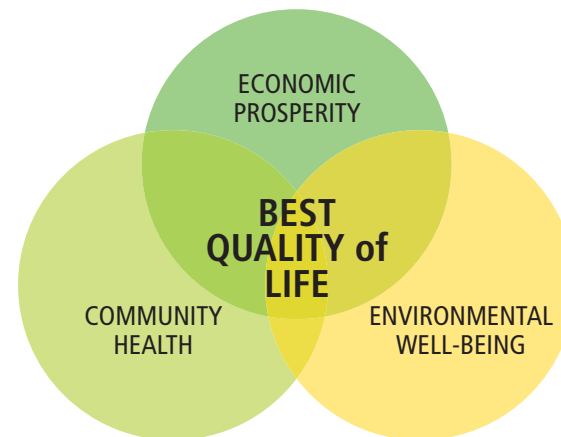
"Our communities will speak with one voice as we establish an integrated mechanism for social, economic and environmental planning in a way that respects historic continuity, maintains and protects the natural environment, coordinates and promotes services and establishes a sense of community for the residents of the Headwaters region, so that we can enhance and celebrate the prosperity, health and well-being of the diverse citizens of our communities."

A Steering Committee was formed and mandated to move the vision into action. Initially known as *The Dufferin Social Prosperity Project*, a new name, *Headwaters Communities in Action*, conveys more clearly what we are trying to achieve. With input from more than 350 citizens and local leaders throughout the Headwaters area we have concluded that the quality-of-life of our region will be bettered by simultaneously addressing three inter-related areas of focus which contribute to quality-of-life:

**Community Health:** Strengthening our health and social services to reflect our communities' changing needs.

**Economic Prosperity:** Ensuring a vibrant local economy that offers sustainable wages and the opportunity for everyone to reach his or her potential.

**Environmental Well-being:** Protecting and responsibly using our environmental assets.



## We have adopted this approach because:

**It reflects the voice of the community:** Residents want a comprehensive vision and plan that addresses the economic and social well-being of our residents and builds upon our region's rich environmental assets.

**It is grounded in best practices:** Research has proven that for a community to develop in a sustainable way, the social, economic and environmental dimensions all need to be addressed in a balanced and integrated manner, to meet both present as well as future needs.

# Our Project Funding

We are grateful to the following community agencies who contributed the seed funding to launch this project:

- Community Care Access Centre of Wellington-Dufferin
- Community Living Dufferin
- Family Transition Place
- Headwaters Health Care Centre
- Waterloo Region District Health Council

In 2005-2006, **The Ontario Trillium Foundation** and **Service Canada** provided grants to support the public forums and education sessions that built the consensus around the initiatives outlined in this Community Action Plan. They also funded the website and communications infrastructure. The project has also benefited from the generous contribution of time from many community volunteers and the in-kind donations from a number of community agencies.

**Headwaters Communities in Action** is now actively working to secure funding from a variety of sources including charitable foundations and various levels of government, to begin implementing the projects identified for 2007. However, contributions – both in-kind and financial – will continue to be needed from the residents of our communities.



Photo Credit: John Lawson

# Conclusion

This Community Action Plan synthesizes the many conversations **Headwaters Communities in Action** has hosted throughout the region. Through this process we have been inspired by the passion and commitment of our citizens and the willingness of people from every sector to share their time and knowledge in the spirit of building a strong and healthy future for us all.

The projects and strategies outlined here have come from you – the citizens of the Headwaters region. Realizing this plan and implementing the ideas outlined here will require the continued effort and partnership already demonstrated by so many individuals and organizations. There is no doubt that by uniting behind a shared vision and common Action Plan, the residents of the Headwaters communities will accomplish incredible things together.

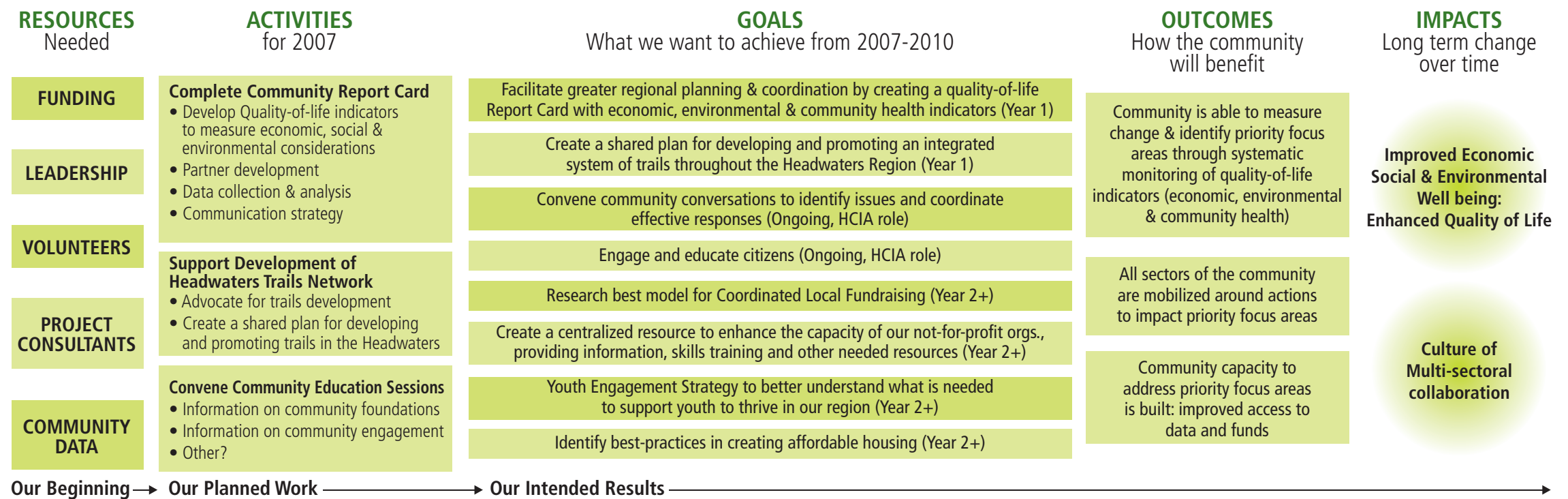




# The Community Action Plan

Throughout May 2006, **Headwaters Communities in Action** convened a series of focus groups with local “experts” in education, business, community health and the environment. The purpose of these sessions was to identify specific, concrete projects that could move us towards realizing our vision. These sessions identified eight specific ideas for action. A description of each idea is provided in the “goals” section of the diagram.

These eight ideas were endorsed and prioritized by the community in June at the **Building Momentum** event. Together they form the basis of a three-year Community Action Plan to positively impact quality of life in the Headwaters area. **Headwaters Communities in Action** is already implementing two of these ideas through our own role: the Community Convenor and Citizen Education & Engagement. We will continue to fulfill these functions until other formal structures or mechanisms are developed.



While ultimately each of the remaining six ideas will be implemented, the priorities for action in 2007 are:

- To create a Quality-of-Life Report Card that focuses on environmental, community health and economic indicators; and,
- To engage trails leaders and key stakeholders in creating a shared plan to develop and promote the trails of the Headwaters area

## 2007 Work Plan for Headwaters Communities in Action

A more comprehensive overview of our two priority initiatives for 2007 is outlined below.

### A Quality-of-Life Report Card

This initiative responds to the need for a comprehensive, process that addresses economic, environmental and community health issues in a coordinated way and provides the data needed to foster greater collective planning and action across our region. It also strengthens our ability to speak with a strong collective voice provincially and federally for the unique interests of our region.

The Report Card will provide concrete information to citizens, organizational leaders, and politicians about the core challenges and strengths facing our communities. As proven in other communities, the visibility of this information is a crucial first step in galvanizing support across sectors and municipal boundaries to find innovative solutions to shared challenges. The Report Card will track indicators within the three areas of strategic focus: economic prosperity, community health and environmental well-being. This threefold focus aligns with the vision, but also offers a useful gauge of progress. Quality-of-life often is impacted by linkages between these spheres of community life. The recognition of these linkages can play a significant role in

turning competing interests into common causes.

Ultimately, the Quality-of-Life report card will be a catalyst for community action. It will assist our communities to think systemically, to plan strategically, and to build consensus about priorities for investment and action. Over time, subsequent report cards will enable evaluation of the impact of community efforts to take action on identified issues. The Quality of Life Report Card will also be a tool to more easily identify emerging issues before they become entrenched problems.

Other communities have found that the process of preparing a Quality of Life Report Card is as important as the final product. A participatory process ensures that the real needs of the community are measured and fosters continuous building of the partnerships and multi-sector collaborations necessary for effective action on the issues that are identified. The membership of the Working Group and Resource Group will include representation from the broader community, including business, health and social services, education, environmental and political sectors, as well as citizens groups.

### A Headwaters Trails Network

HCIA consultations determined that an interconnected system of trails would have a significant impact on at least two of the three areas of strategic focus.

Many residents treasure the “green space” of our region and see its tourist potential. This natural asset is underutilized because there is no comprehensive regional trail system or a coordinated strategy to create one. There are a number of committed trails groups in the Headwaters Region who are, for the most part, working independently. Unlike the regions surrounding us, we do not have a regional trail network to coordinate planning and to collaboratively access resources.

Trails offer communities powerful health benefits—particularly for residents with lower incomes. This is especially significant for our region, given our rising obesity rates. Other environmental benefits of trails include helping to reduce automobile use, acting as agricultural buffers and helping to improve air and water quality by protecting plants that naturally filter out air pollutants.

Because trails “guide visitors and residents through diverse neighbourhoods, past interesting shops, enticing restaurants and other businesses”, they have been shown to have a positive economic impact on communities as well. “70% of trail users spend money on non-durable goods during their visits to the Bruce Trail. Of those 70%, the average expenditure per 3-person group was \$60.99 – the majority of which was spent within a 10 km corridor on either side of the trail.”

(Source: Go For Green, The Economic Benefit of Trails, Trail Monitor 1, p.3)





A recent literature review of "best practices" conducted by Trans Canada Trail Ontario has found that, "With the gap between the provincial organization of TCTO and the local trail groups, the need for a regional body to represent local issues to the provincial body is required. This would create a network that information, funding, marketing and support could be better delivered between TCTO and the local groups, thus, the concept of the Regional Trail Committee (RTC) was developed. Although this concept would greatly serve the completion of the TCT in Ontario, other trail organizations like the Ontario Trails Council would also benefit with the creation of RTC's for the development of the Trillium Trail Network (TTN)."

As a first step in furthering the development of trails throughout the Headwaters Region, HCIA partnered with the Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association to convene interested trail activists. At this meeting, HCIA offered to play a leadership role in convening trail leaders to establish a "Headwaters Regional Trails Network." Its mandate would be to develop a shared plan for trail development and promotion throughout the region. Such a plan would improve the:

- success of all trail groups to secure government and philanthropic financing for trail development across the county;
- capacity to organize community events that promote trail use for local citizens
- ability to attract eco-tourists to the benefit of our local businesses

## HCIA Project Structure

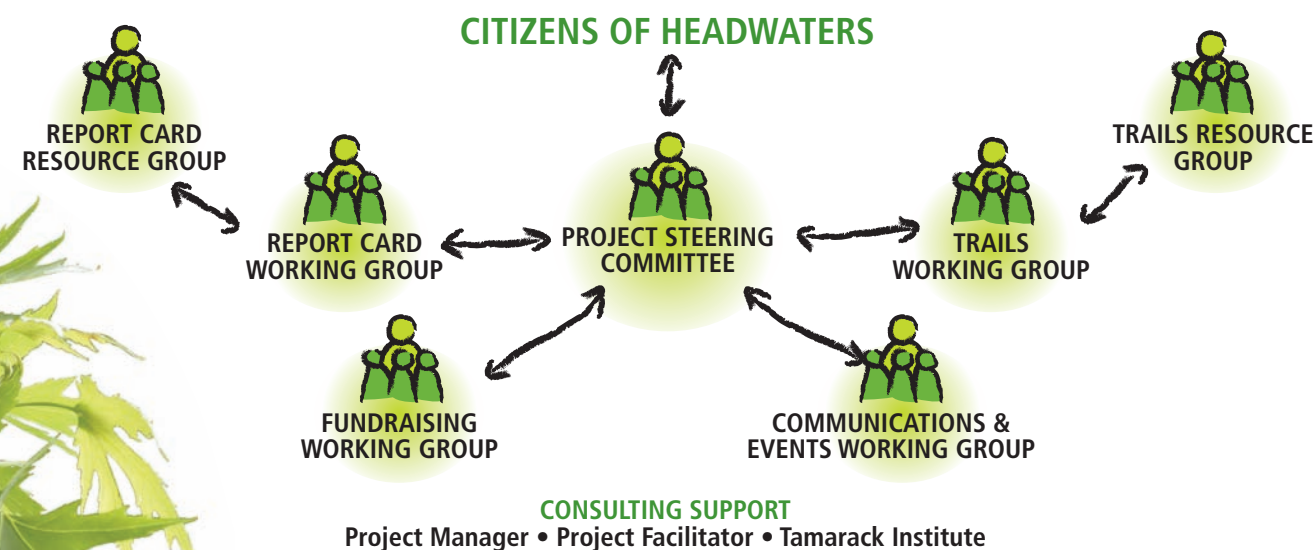
As the role of *Headwaters Communities in Action* continues to evolve; our project structure adapts to reflect this changing role.

The **Project Steering Committee** draws its diverse group of volunteers from throughout Headwaters. Their collective knowledge and thinking provide strategic direction to this project. Steering Committee members also act as ambassadors, representing the Project to the community and local governments.

**Working Groups** have been created to help achieve the project's deliverables. Composed of community volunteers, each Working Group is responsible for developing and implementing a work plan and reporting to the Steering Committee. Where appropriate, Resource Groups of knowledge experts will provide the Working Groups with additional support.

**Consulting Support:** Sylvia Cheuy and Holly Greenwood, consultants to HCIA, have assisted us in moving the project forward. They support the Steering Committee and each of the Working Groups by researching best practices, designing and facilitating various consultations and providing overall administration.

Expert advice has been provided by the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement, a firm on the leading edge of supporting projects like ours across Canada. Tamarack's President, Paul Born, has been an important champion and invaluable resource to Headwaters Communities in Action.



## Our Current Reality

To effectively enhance quality-of-life within the Headwaters Region, we must begin with an appreciation of our current reality. The research and consultations conducted by **Headwaters Communities in Action** provide a "snapshot" of both our region's assets and challenges. (Please see our environmental scan at... [www.headwaterscommunities.ca](http://www.headwaterscommunities.ca))

Dufferin County is one of only two jurisdictions in the province without a regional plan. As an alternative, **Headwaters Communities in Action** has been building broad support for a citizens' plan across the region: the Community Action Plan. There is strong consensus around the Vision of Social Prosperity. Citizens are eager to come together, to explore the key issues confronting us, and develop initiatives aimed at strengthening the social fabric of our community.



**Headwaters Communities in Action** Values Statement expresses the ways in which we intend to work with one another and other community partners to realize the vision of social prosperity.

### The Values of Headwaters Communities in Action

#### 1 Inclusion and Accessibility

We recognize the intrinsic value of all people and are committed to engaging all citizens in building the region's social prosperity

#### 2 Multi-Sector Collaboration

We recognize that collaborating across various sectors in new ways is key to addressing complex community issues

#### 3 Sustainability

We are committed to building upon existing community strengths and designing sustainable initiatives

#### 4 Innovation

We will model and nurture creativity and innovation throughout the Headwaters Region

#### 5 Effectiveness

We will monitor our progress, continuously learn and apply and share our learnings to ensure we are maximizing our resources

