



The Municipality of **Lambton Shores**



Grand Bend Beach **Research and Consultation Initiative** MAY 2011



Municipality of Lambton Shores

Grand Bend Beach Research and Consultation Initiative

FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

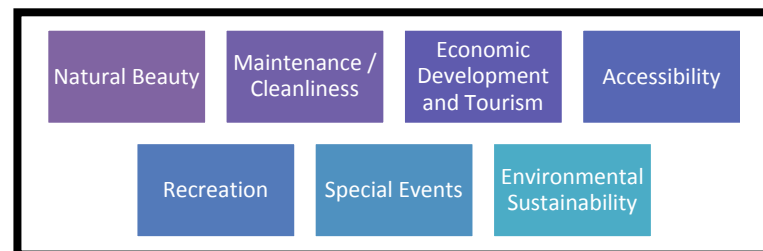
The Grand Bend Beach Research and Consultation Initiative has been driven by a Terms of Reference that addressed a number of areas to be explored:

- Defining the role of the Grand Bend Beach;
- Determining appropriate uses of the Grand Bend Beach and examining best practices in municipal beach management and tourism;
- Identifying improvements or additions to existing infrastructure;
- Reviewing the municipal rate structure for beach rentals; and
- Determining possible partnerships for the delivery of recreation and leisure services on the Grand Bend Beach.

In addition, ecological and environmental issues have been addressed in a separate subsection of the Initiative (as well as being interspersed throughout), as the need for balance between the ecological health of the beach and promoting tourism as an economic driver emerged as a key concept through background research and consultation efforts. This Executive Summary includes all recommended actions from the Research and Consultation Initiative, each positioned with the Terms of Reference component that is the best fit. It should be noted that there are legal issues and implications associated with various rights of way and access to the North Beach between the Municipality and the respective property owner. Given these constraints, there may be limits to organized activities taking place on the North Beach without the participation and consent of affected property owners. Therefore, the recommended actions contained in this Report could be subject to change due to the above.

Defining the role of the Grand Bend Beach

The role of the Grand Bend Beach was defined following the identification of a number of key themes that emerged through public consultation, background research, and a review of beach management practices in other communities (both locally and abroad). These themes reflect the breadth of impact of a beach, as well as the importance of balancing ecological and economic factors. Once these themes were extracted, the role of the Grand Bend Beach was delineated. The themes were as follows:





The themes are further illustrated in the graphic below, and have served to inform the needs assessment process.

Natural Beauty

- The Grand Bend Beach is a naturally beautiful municipal asset enjoyed by residents and tourists alike.

Cleanliness

- The cleanliness of both the beach and the water are important to the continued viability and value of the Grand Bend Beach.

Economic Development & Tourism

- The Grand Bend Beach is one of the Municipality's greatest attractors for employment, tourism and seasonal residents.

Accessibility

- All residents and visitors, regardless of ability, are welcomed and able to access the Grand Bend Beach and its amenities.

Recreation

- Recreation is a key element of the Grand Bend Beach.

Special Events

- Community-level special events that do not threaten the ecological well-being of the beach itself are important economic drivers.

Environmental Sustainability

- The environmental impact of beach activities should be considered when determining whether they are appropriate. Ongoing environmental remediation (e.g., dune grass plantings, etc.) is essential for the long-term health of the Grand Bend Beach.



Each theme is reflected within the defined role of the Grand Bend Beach, as each emerged as a crucial element in the composition of a municipal beach for seasonal and permanent residents and visitors alike.

The role of the Grand Bend Beach is to provide a clean and naturally beautiful environment within which residents and visitors alike can appreciate their natural surroundings while safely partaking in a meaningful range of recreational activities and community events, while at the same time supporting Municipal economic development objectives and local businesses.

This role definition should assist the Municipality in assessing activities or partnerships proposed by staff or outside organizations, in that it provides a general overview of the principles that govern the ongoing management of the Grand Bend Beach. The definition of beach management considered during the preparation of this Research and Consultation Initiative is that, "beach management seeks to maintain or improve a beach as a recreational resource and a means of coast protection, while providing facilities that meet the needs and aspirations of those who use the beach."¹ This definition supports the defined role of the Grand Bend Beach in that it identifies the need for balance between the environmental and tourist roles of a beach. This often dichotomous role can be difficult to manage, but with vigilance and commitment to the interests of economic development through tourism, environmental awareness, and protection of a natural resource, the Municipality of Lambton Shores is well positioned to oversee the management of the Grand Bend Beach. In addition, local businesses (e.g., retail, restaurants, campgrounds, etc.) play important roles in the economic health of the Municipality.

¹ Bird, E.C.F. (1996). Beach management John Wiley & Sons: Chichester and New York.



Determining appropriate uses of the Grand Bend Beach

The appropriate uses of a beach will vary between beaches, but the key aspect of determining the appropriate uses is to consider the beach in question and what its carrying capacity is for environmental and tourist endeavours. In the case of the Grand Bend Beach, numerous opinions regarding appropriate uses emerged through consultation efforts (see graphic on page 33). Upon consideration of these inputs, as well as research in other communities and of potential environmental impacts, the following four key areas of use surfaced:

- Unscheduled, spontaneous active and passive recreation opportunities;
- Environmental protection and associated education activities;
- Tourism; and
- Special events organized by community groups, provided that these events do not degrade the environmental well-being of the Grand Bend Beach.

With respect to prime and non-prime hours at the beach, prime hours are defined as dawn to dusk between Father's Day and Labour Day, as well as weekends from Victoria Day through Father's Day, inclusive (given the historically warmer temperatures during this period). In the past, Grand Bend was home to a great deal of non-prime activity, particularly when the Lakeview Casino and the dancehall were in operation. These venues served as attractors for tourists as famous performers (including Louis Armstrong and Guy Lombardo) were regularly featured. Although these venues are no longer in existence, opportunities may exist for similar activities that may not be hosted on the beach itself, but rather in the parking areas or the rooftop of the Beach House or on Main Street. As such, it is recommended that the Municipality develop a policy that will prohibit commercial events on long weekends (Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday and Labour Day), but will allow up to two commercial events (maximum of 3 days per event) on the Main Beach during the prime summer season, provided the ecological health of the beach is respected, the event not take up a portion of the beach considered to be detrimental to non-event usage (as deemed by the Municipality), and the event be affiliated with a Lambton Shores community group and/or business. Commercial events are events that are organized by an entity (e.g., business or corporation) and/or events for which the main goal is to earn a profit for the organizer. In addition, activities, events and other commercial ventures that take place in Grand Bend but off-beach should be supported by the Municipality, in part for their potential to draw visitors to the beach area.

In the past, the Municipality of Lambton Shores has rented the beach out for large-scale volleyball tournaments and had a non-municipal company provide a yoga / Pilates session on the observation deck of the Beach House. While large-scale tournaments that take place on the beach itself are not recommended due to the amount of beach required and potential long-term environmental impacts, it is recommended that the Municipality continue to support the provision of active living programs on the observation deck of the Beach House (preferably during non-prime hours). This will provide a small amount of additional revenue while supporting the Municipality's dedication to active living and the health of its residents.



In addition to identifying appropriate uses, the Terms of Reference included the task of examining best practices in municipal beach management and the positioning of the Grand Bend Beach as a world class beach. Based upon research, consultation and best practices (including adaptation of a Project for Public Spaces tool into a checklist for Grand Bend²), the recommendation to strive to continue to be a world class *lakefront* beach is the most appropriate action to undertake with regards to the Grand Bend Beach. This would involve ongoing consideration of issues including:

- accessibility to the waterfront by means other than private vehicles (e.g., bike paths, sidewalks, etc.);
- limiting residential waterfront development;
- honouring local identity and history to create a sense of place; and
- maintaining a community vision with respect to the Grand Bend Beach.

In addition, maintaining the Municipality's involvement with the Blue Flag Programme will be a key element of a world class lakefront beach, as this designation is defined by achieving global standards regarding environmental education / information, water quality, environmental management, and safety and services. The Municipality's position as the first in North America to be awarded this distinction for its marinas should be a source of pride for the entire community. Signage also emerged from the background research (including the Municipality's Community Design Plan) as a key element of providing a world class beach experience, as it offers continuity to visitors and residents with respect to locating places within the community, providing educational and/or interpretive opportunities, and directional information.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores focus use of the Grand Bend Beach as a venue for unscheduled, spontaneous active and passive recreation opportunities.

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores be open to input from the general public with respect to major decisions regarding the Grand Bend Beach.

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores strive to satisfy the items on the checklist of components of a world class lakefront beach (including items such as placing limits on residential waterfront development, promoting access to the waterfront by means other than private vehicles, maintaining community vision through good management, honouring local identity, history and culture, etc.) to the greatest degree possible.

² Project for Public Spaces. (n.d.). 10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination. Accessed from http://www.pps.org/articles/10_qualities_of_a_great_waterfront on January 12, 2011.



It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to strive to maintain Blue Flag Status at the Grand Bend Beach, as well as at Grand Bend Harbour and Port Franks Marina.

To ensure continued accuracy of water quality readings, it is recommended that the Municipality continue its use of the Lambton Shores Swimming Water Information Monitor (S.W.I.M.).

It is recommended that the Municipality adopt the following definition of prime time with respect to the Grand Bend Beach: dawn to dusk daily from Father's Day weekend through Labour Day weekend, as well as weekends from Victoria Day through Father's Day, inclusive.

It is recommended that the Municipality develop a policy that will prohibit events on long weekends (Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday and Labour Day), but will allow up to two commercial events (maximum of 3 days per event) on the Main Beach during the prime summer season, provided the ecological health of the beach is respected, the event not take up a portion of the beach considered to be detrimental to non-event usage (as deemed by the Municipality), and the event be affiliated with a Lambton Shores community group and/or business.

It is recommended that activities, events and other commercial ventures that take place in Grand Bend, but off-beach, should be supported by the Municipality, in part for their potential to draw visitors to the beach area.

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to track the daily interactions at each parking meter within the municipal parking lots and on Main Street in Grand Bend to monitor beach visits. This will allow the Municipality to compare trends in visits from summer to summer, as well as on long weekends versus regular weekends, etc. to determine needs for additional amenities, maintenance efforts, etc.

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to support the provision of active living programs on the observation deck of the Beach House (preferably during non-prime hours).

Identifying improvements or additions to existing infrastructure

The Municipality of Lambton Shores has, in recent years, made significant improvements to its waterfront infrastructure, beginning with the construction of the concession stand and Beach House in preparation for the 2001 Canada Summer Games. In 2008 and 2009, the Municipality completed a number of projects at the Grand Bend Beach, including:



- A new boardwalk that is accessible to persons with disabilities and emergency responders;
- Planting areas and trees, including the reintroduction of natural species to serve as a wind and sand barrier between the water and the parking areas;
- Stormwater management through limited paving, the use of porous materials in the parking lots, using stormwater for plantings, and limiting the use of chlorinated water for plantings;
- Accessible splash pad and playground;
- Low energy lighting options throughout the beach facilities, including LED lighting fixtures and reducing light pollution while maintaining safety; and
- Shade structures including a gazebo, umbrellas near the concession and splash pad, and tree plantings.

Each of these projects has added to the functionality of the Grand Bend Beach. Due to the relatively recent construction of many of these components, the Municipality seems to be well-positioned with respect to infrastructure needs. However, one area that seems to be lacking somewhat is washrooms outside of the Main Beach area. Visitors to the South Beach are prompted to use the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building (in addition to the two washrooms located at the boat launch), a practice which should continue, although these facilities would likely require refurbishment or expansion to accommodate any increased patronage to the South Beach. Therefore, it is recommended that the Municipality refurbish the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour. In addition, public consultation revealed a desire for the boardwalk to be extended onto the North Beach; it is recommended that the Municipality consider the feasibility of expanding the boardwalk to the North Beach area to allow emergency vehicle access and remove the physical access barrier to the North Beach.

Sand volleyball is generally a popular beach activity, and many municipalities include volleyball courts in their inventories. In some cases, organizations may rent these facilities to provide league and/or tournament play. In others, the net posts are there in the event someone is interested in putting up a net and playing a pick-up game. Participation in sand volleyball is a popular summertime beach activity and should not be entirely banned from the Grand Bend Beach. To facilitate casual participation in sand volleyball, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores install four sets of beach volleyball net posts at the Grand Bend Beach (locations will need to be evaluated. Signs should be posted stating that the courts are operating on a first-come-first-served basis and should be vacated after 1 hour if other users are waiting.

In the past, commercially organized beach volleyball tournaments on the Grand Bend Beach have been somewhat negatively received by the general public and residents, suggesting that these private tournaments are not the ideal use of this natural municipal asset. Support exists within the community and within this Research and Consultation Initiative for the promotion of the beach as a venue for unscheduled, spontaneous active and passive recreation activities, but also for limited commercial activities (see recommendation



regarding commercial event policy). The balance between maintaining a tourist destination and honouring the ecological integrity of the Grand Bend Beach will be crucial to the long-term well-being of the beach. With respect to parking infrastructure, the Municipality currently offers 629 standard spaces in Grand Bend, as well as 21 accessible spaces. Input received from the public revealed opinions that this is inadequate for the number of visitors received by the community, particularly on long weekends. Unfortunately, there are not any options for additional beachside parking at this time, but the Municipality should consider acquiring lands (through purchase or lease, as was recently done for the King Street lot) should they become available. Other options may include acquiring lands further from the beach and providing shuttle service; this option would have to be explored in greater depth with respect to costs prior to taking any action.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) provides a guide to the process of developing and designing a signage system³, which has been adapted below as the recommended plan of action for the Municipality of Lambton Shores with respect to Municipality-wide signage; once decisions have been made on the signage system for the entire Municipality, discussions on how this will be reflected within Grand Bend may be undertaken. The stages are as follows:

- Determining the purpose of the overall signage system (e.g., directional, informational, heritage, etc.) and identify what signage exists in each community;
- Documenting existing signage to determine what is missing or needs improvement;
- Community consultation to gather input regarding resident and visitor needs with respect to signage (e.g., at what locations they feel signage is lacking, what information they are seeking from municipal signage, etc.);
- Considering what historical and cultural landmarks and events to highlight through heritage signage;
- Creating a signage master plan for the Municipality which identifies what the needs and requirements are for informational, wayfinding, orientation, and identification signage; and
- Testing potential signage designs with staff members, community groups, local residents, and visitors.

It is recommended that the Municipality follow the proposed signage planning process across the Municipality and all of its communities to ensure that a uniform set of directional, informational and heritage signs meet the needs of residents and visitors alike. Specifically, it is recommended that the Municipality ensure that signage is erected to provide directions to the three separate sections of the Grand Bend Beach (North, South and Main), to identify the location of the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building that are intended to serve the South Beach, as well as municipal parking lots and beach access points to make mobility through the community easier for visitors and residents.

³ Project for Public Spaces. (n.d.). Signage. Accessed from http://www.pps.org/articles/signage_guide/ on January 10th, 2011.



Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to monitor the general condition of the Beach House, identifying life cycle maintenance and improvement requirements, including projected costs to be incorporated into the municipal budget for the year(s) of completion.

It is recommended that the Municipality ensure it continues to fulfill the following Lifesaving Society safety requirements at the Grand Bend Beach by providing: a dedicated emergency phone with posted emergency numbers; rescue aid for each lifeguard; at least 2 buoyant throwing assists with buoyant lines; at least 2 reaching poles; at least one spineboard with effective immobilization system; at least one Number 2 first aid kit; a designated first aid area; and rescue craft if the swimming area extends more than 50 metres from shore.

It is recommended that the playground at the Grand Bend Beach continue to be included among the inventory of municipal playgrounds that are part of this assessment program and upgrades and repairs should be undertaken as deemed necessary by inspections.

With respect to the splash pad, it is recommended that the Municipality should continue to undertake regular inspections to ensure the concrete is free from chipping and cracks and water features are in good working order; any issues should be addressed as soon as possible.

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to maintain paid parking lots on the beach side of Highway 21 to provide ongoing revenue to offset beach operating costs; it is also recommended that the Municipality continue to offer discounted seasonal parking passes to local property owners.

Although parking at the beachfront is currently limited to existing space, it is recommended that the Municipality consider acquiring further lands to be used for parking, whether through lease or purchase should the opportunity arise; should this parking area be further than one kilometre from the beach, the Municipality should investigate the provision of a shuttle service.

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to implement and follow the guidance provided within the Harbour Sustainability Plan at Grand Bend Harbour (examples include using green cleaning supplies and bathroom products, installing high efficiency lighting, and loaning bicycles to boaters while they are docked).



To facilitate casual participation in sand volleyball, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores install four sets of beach volleyball net posts on the Grand Bend Beach; potential locations will need to be assessed.

It is recommended that the Municipality consider Klondyke Park as a possible location for sand volleyball courts (minimum of four courts) that may be used for casual play or organized use.

It is recommended that the Municipality follow the proposed signage planning process across the Municipality and all of its communities (stages include clarification of goals, surveying existing signage conditions, understanding signage needs, identifying unique historical and cultural aspects), including revisiting discussions from previous signage consultation efforts.

It is recommended that the Municipality identify a list of potential sites that have relevance to the history of Grand Bend, research the facts of each, and select for plaquing/signing those that are the most significant.

It is recommended that the Municipality ensure that signage is erected to provide directions to the three sections of the Grand Bend Beach (North, South and Main), to identify the location of the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building that serve the South Beach, as well as municipal parking lots and beach access points to make mobility through the community easier for visitors and residents.

It is recommended that if, in the future, the Community Services Department is repaving streets near the beach, the addition of sidewalks should be considered if feasible in terms of space and financial requirements.

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores refurbish the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building should the need arise as a result of increased patronage to South Beach.

It is recommended that the Municipality consider the feasibility of expanding the boardwalk to the North Beach area to allow emergency vehicle access and remove the physical access barrier to the North Beach.

Reviewing the municipal rate structure for beach rentals

For 2011, private beach rentals rates are \$218.25 per day (plus hydro at \$109.25 for the initial day of rental and \$32.80 for each subsequent rental day. As discussed within this Report, limited commercial use (up to two commercial events during the prime



summer season, excluding long weekends) of the Grand Bend Beach is supported, provided the natural ecology of the beach is not threatened by the event. The Municipality of Lambton Shores has already determined its beach rental rates through the next two years, which currently are reasonable for events organized by community-based no-profit organizations and private citizens.

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Municipality revisit the beach rental rates following the 2012 summer season, taking into account the frequency and type of rentals that occur over the next two years.

Determining possible partnerships for the delivery of recreation and leisure services on the Grand Bend Beach

To successfully operate the Grand Bend Beach, the Municipality of Lambton Shores has created a series of formal and informal relationships to address water quality, special events, and environmental issues. These partnerships are crucial as they allow the Municipality to access expert opinions that serve to enhance the Grand Bend Beach for residents and visitors. Future potential partners should be chosen carefully, with consideration given to their alignment with the role of the Grand Bend Beach, as well as satisfying the proposed partnership framework. This will provide the Municipality with the evidence or support to forgo or move ahead with a partnership. The Municipality currently maintains a successful partnership with the Grand Bend Rotary Club with respect to performing at least three water quality tests per week annually from July 1st through Labour Day weekend. If there is such a time when this partnership is no longer an option, the Municipality should seek additional partnership to undertake this task. Should the Municipality be unable to secure a partner to perform these additional tests, the operating costs of approximately \$10,000 per annum will need to be incorporated into the Community Services Department budget.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to partner with the Grand Bend Rotary Club with respect to performing at least three water quality tests per week annually from July 1st through Labour Day weekend. If there is such a time when this partnership is no longer an option, the Municipality should seek an additional partnership to undertake this task. Should the Municipality be unable to secure a partner to perform these additional tests, the operating costs of approximately \$10,000 per annum will need to be incorporated into the Community Services Department budget.

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to pursue the goal of providing real time water quality information online through its website, Twitter and Facebook, as well as at the Grand Bend Beach itself.



It is recommended that the Municipality maintain its existing relationships with respect to Aquafest, Grand Bend Canada Day fireworks, and Grand Bend Optimist Burgerfest; should new opportunities or requests come forth, it is recommended that the Municipality consider these partnerships through the use of a tool similar to the Standardized Partnered Service Provision Framework proposed within the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, albeit adjusted to account for the unique conditions of the beach.

It is recommended that the Municipality conduct a meeting with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority as an information gathering exercise and to broach the subject of partnership if both parties feel that this could be beneficial to each side.

Ecological and Environmental Issues

As mentioned, ecological and environmental issues are addressed throughout the Initiative, but were also deemed worthy of their own subsection, given the emergent importance of balancing ecology with tourism in a beachfront community like Grand Bend. Consultation efforts revealed a great concern for the environmental well-being of the beach, and a desire not to see commercialization. Environmental research, discussions with environmental experts, best practices from other waterfront communities, and the Consultants' own experience, along with the public concern, have led to the recommendations that community events that do not threaten the ecological sensitivity of the Grand Bend Beach, and unscheduled, spontaneous active and passive recreation activities are the least invasive to the natural beauty of the beach. The revitalization of the Grand Bend Beach that took place in 2008-2009 included the planting of dune grasses to reduce the impacts of wind erosion on the dunes; this action may require greater ongoing public education, but is seen as a positive step towards promoting environmentally sound management practices for the Grand Bend Beach, while respecting its role as a tourism and recreation attractor for visitors and residents alike.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue with the process of dune restoration and dune grass plantings to reduce unnecessary erosion and beach loss, while ensuring that ample beach space is left for recreational purposes.

It is recommended that the Municipality remove the snow fencing that currently surrounds the Main Beach dune grass planting areas at such a time as the plantings have sufficiently taken root (to be re-evaluated by the Municipality prior to each summer season) .

It is recommended that the Municipality install educational signage near the dune grass planting areas to inform the general public about the importance of dune grass to the health of the dunes.



It is recommended that the Municipality replace permanent flower bed snow fences (near Beach House) with decorative fencing and add them to its maintenance roster for the long-term.

To better balance tourism and environmental protection of the beach, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores reduce the frequency of its grooming of the Grand Bend Beach (in 2010, the beach groomer was used daily between Father's Day and Labour Day on the Main Beach and every other day on the North Beach) for the upcoming 2011 summer season. It is recommended that the Municipality monitor the Main Beach and the North Beach and groom each as needed (as opposed to a pre-determined schedule) to attempt to limit the environmental impacts upon the beach.

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores undertake a measurement exercise to determine the existing usable beach square footage, dune grass planting area square footage, and setback distances from the water's edge, such that these measurements may be compared annually to help the Municipality monitor the effects of erosion on the Grand Bend Beach.



Introduction

Purpose of the Research and Consultation Initiative

The Municipality of Lambton Shores Council is currently reviewing its first Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan since amalgamating in 2001. During the course of the Master Plan's preparation, a significant amount of feedback was obtained from the community and Municipal representatives regarding the Grand Bend Beach, thus it became apparent that defining the future role of the Beach required its own comprehensive study. As such, a priority Action Plan arising from the Master Plan was that:

The Municipality should continue to program Grand Bend Beach in a similar manner as has been carried out over the past number of years until a Research and Consultation initiative specifically addressing the following is undertaken:

- *Defining the role of the Grand Bend Beach and having regard for community stakeholders such as abutting land owners, visitors, downtown businesses, peripheral tourism businesses (e.g. hotels, restaurants, etc.) and other residents/organizations within Lambton Shores;*
- *Determining appropriate use(s) of the Grand Bend Beach, including its capacity, capability and role to serve as a special event venue and the feasibility of incorporating active living opportunities;*
- *Examine best practices to municipal beach management and tourism to position Grand Bend Beach as a leader in providing world-class beachfront experiences.*
- *Identifying improvements or additions to existing infrastructure (washrooms, parking, lifeguard and emergency services, concessions, etc.) to meet current and projected needs, as well as the carrying capacity of the beach and constraints associated with the area (e.g., Conservation Authority regulations) to accommodate such infrastructure;*
- *Review and make recommendations regarding the existing municipal rate structure for beach rentals; and*
- *Determine possible partnerships for the delivery of recreation and leisure services on the Grand Bend Beach including the appropriateness of maintaining the "status quo" with respect to private sector and/or public-private partnerships.*



The Grand Bend Beach Research and Consultation Initiative has been undertaken as a response to the need to define ‘acceptable uses’ for the beach. The aforementioned Action Plan stemming from the Master Plan provides the basis to ensure that the appropriate attention is paid to the Grand Bend Beach, and serves as the Terms of Reference for this Research and Consultation Initiative. In addition, this Study includes an examination of the merits and constraints associated with using the Grand Bend Beach and/or other locations deemed plausible for beach/sand volleyball programming. It should be noted that there are legal issues and implications associated with these issues surrounding various rights of way and access to the North Beach between the Municipality and the respective property owner. Given these constraints, there may be limits to organized activities taking place on the North Beach without the participation and consent of affected property owners. Therefore, the recommendations contained in this report could be subject to change due to the above.

Methodology

Building off work conducted through the Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, MONTEITH BROWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS (MBPC) was retained to complete the Grand Bend Beach Research and Consultation Initiative. The project commenced in October 2010 with an introductory community visioning session, while the core research and assessment tasks were initiated after the Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan neared its final stages.

In order to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current and future roles of the Grand Bend Beach, MBPC has conducted an extensive review of background research, community demographics and best practices from other waterfront communities, analysed the existing waterfront infrastructure supply, and carried out an extensive consultation with local residents, user groups and representatives from the Municipality of Lambton Shores. Specifically, the consultation program has employed the following tasks:

- A Community Feedback Survey (available both online and in hard copy);
- A Community Visioning Session with local residents and stakeholders with an interest in the Grand Bend Beach;
- Key informant interviews with Municipality staff, external agencies, and other waterfront municipalities;
- A review of best practices in other Ontario waterfront municipalities; and
- A Public Information Centre that is scheduled for March 2011.

Based upon key themes found through the background research and consultation efforts (natural beauty, maintenance / cleanliness, economic development and tourism, accessibility, recreation, special events, and environmental sustainability), a Strategic Framework (i.e., guiding principles and role of the Grand Bend Beach) was formed. Due to the timing of the Research and Consultation Initiative over the winter months, the Community Visioning Session and Feedback Survey were initiated prior to completion of the Master Plan in order to capture input from the seasonal residents of Lambton Shores. In addition, consultation efforts for the Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan provided supplementary input into the management of the Grand Bend Beach; these comments were catalogued

and considered as contributions to the data analyzed for the Research and Consultation Initiative. The Consulting Team then undertook a needs assessment process, which involved consideration of the findings from the consultation efforts (including the online survey, Community Visioning Session, and interviews), background data and research, and trends.

Definition of the Study Boundary

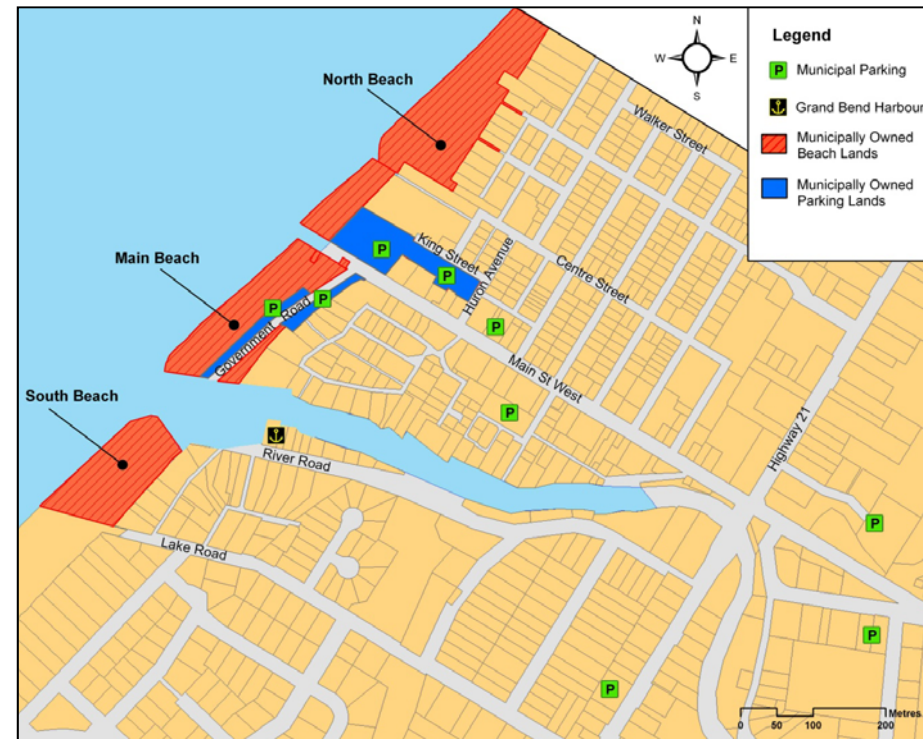
The municipally owned portion of the Grand Bend Beach extends from Lake Road to Walker Street along the shoreline of Lake Huron. The study area also includes parking lots accessed between Main Street West and King Street, as well as the North Beach Lot on the lakeside of Huron Avenue between Main Street and Centre Street. The municipally owned portions of the Grand Bend Beach are illustrated in the adjacent figure in red/orange. The study boundary includes the south beach, main beach and north beach, as well as all municipal amenities located therein (i.e., beach house, playground, splash pad, washrooms, concession, municipally operated parking lots, etc.).

Community Development Master Plan (2008)

In 2006, the Municipality of Lambton Shores released a revised Strategic Plan, which served as the impetus for a Community Design Master Plan for the entire Municipality, as well as Community Development Plans for each individual settlement area. EDA Collaborative, Inc. undertook this project, the results of which (as they relate to Grand Bend) are summarized below.

The key design principles for the Community Design are heritage; people; circulation; special places and destinations; open space and natural places; community character; new design for positive change; and timeline for development. With respect to Grand Bend, these principles have been incorporated into the redevelopment undertaken to date (i.e., roundabout at the beach to improve traffic flow, focusing on the Grand Bend Beach as a 'special place and destination', and enhancing community character through the Main

Study Area for the Grand Bend Beach Research and Consultation Initiative





Street redevelopment and the addition of the boardwalk). The overall Municipal Wide Plan includes a number of elements that must be considered prior to undertaking any design projects in Grand Bend, including standardized signage, prescribed measurements for frontages and walkways, trail design guidelines, and ecological / environmental considerations. Details surrounding each of these areas are available in the Community Design Plan.

With respect to Grand Bend, the key issues that arose from consultation and site visits are illustrated in the following graphic:

Circulation	Identity	Amenities	Programming	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Connectivity•Need for directional signage and bike paths•Traffic congestion and speeding•Narrow bridges•Parking issues on Main Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•General aesthetics and cohesive facades•Absentee landlords•Overhead wires distract from beauty of Main Street•Need for signage and 'sense of arrival' into Grand Bend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Lack of directional and/or informational signage•Perceived shift from seasonal to permanent residential area•Need to connect Main Street and Highway 21•Overhead wires	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Short tourist season within which to maximize economic impact•Lack of community participation and community watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Water quality needs to be addressed•Waste water and storm water need to be addressed•Mature street trees should be considered for future streetscape planning

The Community Design Plan for Grand Bend identifies five key themes: the beach; musical, old dance hall to international music; family friendly and accessible for all people; alternative links and routes for pedestrians; and year-round community. Further to the mention of the beach, the Community Design Plan recommends an extended beach season through the lengthening of the shoulder season to encourage tourists to visit Grand Bend before and after peak beach season, with particular mention made of festivals and events. The Community Design Plan also includes schematic designs as to the future look of Grand Bend with respect to plantings, land uses, pedestrian crossings, etc. As mentioned above, the Municipality of Lambton Shores has already taken great strides in the past two years to address some of these areas through the Grand Bend Beach Enhancement Project and the Grand Bend Main Street Reconstruction. The Research and Consultation Initiative will further explore these themes to provide guidance to the Municipality with respect to future uses, enhancement and/or development.

Glossary of Terms

'Active Living' is a holistic approach to personal wellbeing that combines physical activity with mental, spiritual, and social engagement into a wide range of passive and gentle active leisure pursuits (e.g. yoga, stretching, leisurely walking, cycling, etc.).



'Active Recreation' involves participation in leisure activities that require an individual to be physically involved (e.g., sports, hiking, dance, etc.).

'Arts and cultural beach uses' may include music concerts, festivals, plays, public art, etc.

'Beaches' are shorelines that are made up of sand, stones, gravel or other forms of rock, and beaches are formed over time by the constant ebb and flow of the water. The Municipality of Lambton Shores owns and operates one beach (Grand Bend Beach), but residents and visitors make use of Ipperwash Beach, Pinery Provincial Park Beach and private beaches as well.

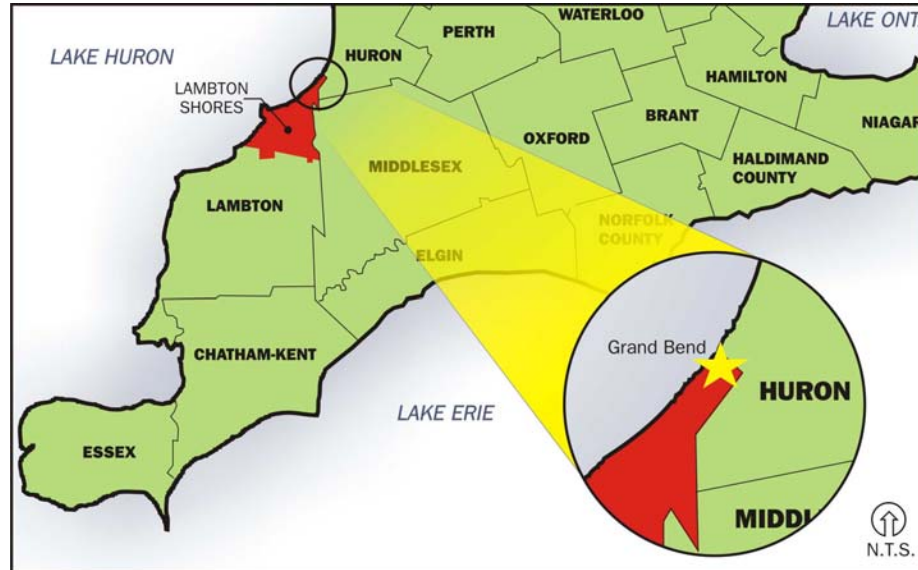
'Organized' activities differ from **'non-programmed'** activities in that organized activities occur at a predetermined time and place, and generally require that one signs up for the program. On the other hand, non-programmed activities are generally self-scheduled and can occur at unstructured locations (e.g., green space, etc.).

Planning Context

Community Profile

Grand Bend is part of the Municipality of Lambton Shores, which was created as the result of the amalgamation of five villages and towns (Arkona, Bosanquet/Port Franks, Forest, Grand Bend, and Thedford) in 2001. Lambton Shores is located in the County of Lambton, bounded to the north by the Lake Huron shoreline. The 2006 Census records Lambton Shores' population at 11,150, representing a 5.5% increase from the 2001 Census. The last Census population of Grand Bend was 1,027 in 1996, which was a 13.2% increase from its 1991 population of 907. It is estimated that the 2011 population of Grand Bend is 1,491 residents based upon a 13.2% growth rate between Census years. Based upon historical Census data, it may be assumed that Grand Bend is growing faster than the other communities within the Municipality, as Grand Bend's growth rate between 1991 and 1996 was nearly double the next highest (Forest at 7.2% growth). In addition to these permanent residents, the Municipality of Lambton Shores in general, and Grand Bend in particular, experiences a massive influx of seasonal residents, tourists and other visitors. According to the Lambton Shores Community Web Guide⁴, there are 21 campgrounds within the Municipality of Lambton Shores, including 6 in Grand Bend. These 21 campgrounds provide a total of 1,553 transient sites and a total of 13,490 (assumed to be seasonal/long-term) sites. This includes 1,000 sites at Pinery Provincial Park. The Municipality's 2005 population projections (provided by C.N. Watson and Associates) included a seasonal/recreational population equivalent based upon 50% occupancy of estimated 2001 seasonal households (n = 1,785). As such, it is assumed that there are some 3,500 seasonal households in the whole of Lambton Shores, although figures are not available for Grand Bend specifically.

Regional Location Map – Grand Bend



⁴ Lambton Shores Community Web Guide. (n.d.). Accessed from <http://www.lambtonshores.com> on January 26, 2011.



Key Trends

In order to appropriately plan for current and future needs with respect to the Grand Bend Beach, the identification and application of existing and emerging trends that may affect beach usage has been undertaken. Understanding trends related to participation, uses, environmental issues, tourism, partnerships, etc. can, to some degree, assist with anticipating shifts in interest in beachgoing activities.

Extensive research has been conducted at local, provincial, national and international levels in order to provide a comprehensive and well balanced perspective. The implications of these trends to the Municipality of Lambton Shores are further explored in the needs assessment section of this Research and Consultation Initiative.

Lack of Free Time

'Lack of time' as a barrier to participation is largely a result of evolving employment and family structures in Canada. Commuting, home-based occupations, night shifts and weekend work are creating the need to have leisure services open later and the need to promote drop-in opportunities. Similarly, the changing face of the Canadian family, with many lone-parents and households with extended families, places significant time pressures and constraints on recreation and leisure participation. The 2006 Statistics Canada Census data revealed that 15.9% of all Census families are lone-parent as the number of lone-parent families headed by women climbed over 1 million, reaching 1,037,425, and an additional 248,900 lone-parent families were headed by men, more than double the number reported 25 years earlier. The average Canadian has only six hours of free time each day (including two hours devoted to TV) and is presented with an unprecedented range of opportunities in the marketplace (e.g., the Internet, video games, etc.) which are consuming more time. Not surprisingly, the 65+ age group has the greatest amount of free time and those in the 25-44 age cohort have the least (3 hours). This supports the notion that casual and unstructured activities, as well as events and programs for older adults, will offer the greatest opportunity for growth. The Municipality of Lambton Shores is aging as a whole, as evidenced by the Municipality's median age of 49.4 years in 2001, which is 9.5 years older than the provincial average; this 'greying' of the population may impact the type of activities in which an older population may choose to participate. For example, walking/hiking and swimming are two activities that are often pursued by older adults and each is available at the Grand Bend Beach. Lambton Shores' beaches not only function as its primary summer tourist attractions, but also provide ample drop-in recreation opportunities for local residents. As in most communities, the household survey undertaken for the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan found that lack of personal time was the primary barrier to participation in both cultural and parks or recreation activities. While the Municipality cannot directly address this barrier, the provision of passive, unstructured beach space, as well as a variety of open space can help residents (permanent and seasonal) and visitors access recreation and culture opportunities at convenient times that fit their busy schedules.



Accessibility

While accessibility for persons with physical disabilities, limited mobility, vision or hearing impairments, and deaf and blind individuals is a major consideration in facility construction, it is a relatively new consideration for beaches. Boardwalks have long been included in beach design, providing some level of access for persons with disabilities, but until recently these have rarely accessed the water's edge. The desire to provide an all-inclusive beach experience for all visitors has ignited a trend to enhance water access for individuals with disabilities. The City of Chicago is at the leading edge of this trend, as 16 of its 33 beaches now have accessible beach walks that run all the way to the water's edge. These beach walks enable persons with disabilities (as well as parents with strollers and persons with temporary mobility issues) to easily access the water without having to struggle through the sand.

The state of Massachusetts' Department of Conservation and Recreation provides beach-friendly wheelchairs at some of its beaches. These wheelchairs are made of PVC pipe and have large plastic wheels that easily roll over and through sand, thus making it easier for the individual to access the water (although they need another person to push the wheelchair). Three Massachusetts state parks also offer built form wheelchair accessibility to the waterfront – concrete platform with seating at the water's edge, steps and ramps leading into the water, and boardwalks that also run to the water's edge. The Municipality of Lambton Shores has an accessible boardwalk that runs parallel to the water; potential does exist for the addition of an accessible path to the water's edge.

Income and Affordability of Recreation and Leisure Opportunities

The household survey undertaken for the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan found that the cost of cultural and parks/recreational programs is a barrier to 7% and 8%, respectively, of those that are not able to participate as often as they would like. In general, a person or household's level of income can be a barrier to participation in leisure pursuits, particularly in organized, structured environments. As such, provision of a balanced range of opportunities are needed and beaches and parks are well suited to offering low-to-no-cost opportunities. Municipalities are facing increasing pressure to offer affordable leisure programs and subsidies to promote participation among all user groups. On the whole, older adults have more disposable income to spend on leisure activities, while young families, youth, and economically disadvantaged individuals may find it difficult to afford to a healthy lifestyle through participation in recreation. Statistics Canada has identified that between 1980 and 2005, the top 20% of Canadian full-time full-year earners saw median earnings rise by 16.4%, contrasted by the bottom 20%, within which median earnings fell by 20.6%. Median earnings by the middle 20% remained constant. The term 'working poor' has been put forward in recent years to describe the financial situation of many Canadians who have a job but do not have any additional funds beyond paying for life necessities (due to increasing cost of living). The Charter for Recreation and Parks in Ontario states that, "everyone in Ontario has a right to quality, accessible and inclusive recreation and parks services in their communities – services that are essential for the health of Ontarians, the quality of life in our communities and the sustainability of our environment." The Grand Bend Beach is free to use recreationally, which provides an accessible option for all families, and fees are only charged of private citizens for small events (e.g., weddings) if items such



as chairs and tables are brought to the beach. For 2011, private beach rentals rates are \$218.25 per day (plus hydro at \$109.25 for the initial day of rental and \$32.80 for each subsequent rental day. The frequency with which events take place depend greatly on the number of requests received, as well as the nature of the events.

Water Quality

Over the past number of years, the concern over water quality has grown as bacterial contaminations in Ontario bodies of water have received an increasing amount of coverage in the news. Bacterial contamination in Lake Huron is especially higher due to agricultural runoff, particularly after a rainfall. As such, more and more communities, including the Municipality of Lambton Shores, are monitoring the lakes on their waterfronts for bacteria and keeping the public informed of levels and the safety of the water for swimming. The Municipality of Lambton Shores is required by the Province of Ontario to have water samples taken at Grand Bend Beach two times per week by the Community Health Unit. The Municipality currently maintains a successful partnership with the Grand Bend Rotary Club with respect to performing at least three additional water quality tests per week annually from July 1st through Labour Day weekend. The additional testing allows the Municipality to more closely monitor bacteria levels at the Grand Bend Beach, which enhances the safety of beachgoers by ensuring the water is safe for bathing. The findings are regularly reported on the Municipality's Twitter feed and the County's website, as well as being displayed at the beach itself; the Municipality will also post results on its Facebook page, beginning in Summer 2011. Since 2007, the Municipality of Lambton Shores has utilized the Lambton Shores Swimming Water Information Monitor (S.W.I.M.), which monitors water quality, clarity, temperature, and wave height. The S.W.I.M. was purchased through a partnership between the Municipality, the Grand Bend Rotary Club and the Grand Bend Community Foundation. In recent years, the general public has shown heightened awareness and concern regarding recreational water quality. Health Canada has guidelines regarding the monitoring of recreational water quality for indicator organisms (enterococci, E. coli, fecal coliforms), based upon salinity of the water, the presence of turbidity, known illnesses caused by these organisms, the proportion that are E. coli, and the local experience of monitoring with the particular organism⁵. Local health authorities are empowered to make decisions as to whether the routine monitoring of a recreational area is necessary, based upon usage, the environmental health assessment and epidemiological evidence⁶.

Emerging Recreation Activities

Across Ontario, there are numerous recreation and leisure activities that are increasing in popularity and are providing rationale for the inclusion of such facilities in municipal inventories, particularly in larger municipalities. With respect to beach-related activities, beach volleyball is popular amongst youth and young adults as an activity that can be played in a flexible, non-structured environment. Eco-

⁵ Health Canada. (Modified January 15, 2010). General requirements for recreational water quality. Accessed online at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/guide_water-1992-guide_eau/section2-eng.php#sec2_3 on February 6, 2011.

⁶ Ibid.



tourism and outdoor passive recreation is a growing market segment as people become increasingly aware of environmental issues. Trips to beaches and conservation areas are popular, as individuals and families take an interest in natural heritage (activities such as bird watching, wildlife viewing, hiking have strong growth profiles) and low-to-no-cost outdoor recreation opportunities.

Beach camping is generally a less expensive option than hotels and motels and usually offers campers the convenience of a short walk to the waterfront. Beach camping is offered on coastlines in North America and other parts of the world, with some of these opportunities being provided within provincial, state and national parks in Canada and the United States. For example, in the Florida Keys, Long Key State Park provides oceanfront campsites that have direct access to the water. Frisco Campground in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore in North Carolina provides camping in sand dunes, while other local national seashore parks offer wilderness camping at the water's edge. In Lambton Shores, one example of beach camping is at Pinery Provincial Park, which provides campsites above the dunes. Campers use designated dune crossing trails to access Lake Huron with minimum environmental impact.

Water Safety

According to the Lifesaving Society's Ontario Drowning Report 2009, nearly 500 Canadians die annually in water-related incidents, with drowning being the second leading preventable cause of death among children under 10 years of age. In addition, 70% of drowning occur in natural waterfront areas (e.g., lakes, rivers, streams, ponds and waterfronts) and 71% of drowning deaths occur while engaged in recreational activities. A July 2010 Toronto Sun article⁷ cites Canadian Red Cross and Lifesaving Society statistics that show summer drownings (May –July) in Ontario increased by 23% over the 2009 numbers. The Lifesaving Society recommends lifeguard-supervised waterfronts (and pools) as the preferred location for water activities, as well as recommending that lifejackets be worn by everyone when boating, and by toddlers any time they are near the water. The Municipality of Lambton Shores provides lifeguards at the Grand Bend Beach during the summer months with three lifeguard towers spread along the Main Beach, and another one on the North Beach. The 2004 Waterfront Safety Standards provided by the Lifesaving Society suggests considering offering separate boating and swimming areas, as well as marking any permanent hazards clearly (e.g., large, non-movable rocks and drop offs). These standards also provide a list of required emergency equipment at all supervised waterfronts; the Municipality should ensure they continue to fulfill these requirements by providing: dedicated emergency phone with posted emergence numbers; rescue aid for each lifeguard; at least 2 buoyant throwing assists with buoyant lines; at least 2 reaching poles; at least one spineboard with effective immobilization system; at least one Number 2 first aid kit; designated first aid area; and rescue craft if the swimming area extends more than 50 metres from shore.

⁷ Peat, D. Ontario drowning subject of chief coroner's office review. Toronto Sun [online], July 29, 2010.



Environmental Stewardship

The importance of environmental protection is being increasingly recognized by society. As the population ages and people become more aware of the benefits of environmental protection, demand for passive settings that connect people to nature is increasing. Municipalities are placing a greater emphasis on the 'development' of passive park spaces. Naturalized park spaces (whether by maintaining a site in its natural state or returning a site to its natural state) are becoming more popular and are consistent with many of the principles related to environmental stewardship. The Municipality of Lambton Shores has recently undertaken a stewardship initiative with the planting of dune grasses at the Grand Bend Beach to reintroduce the natural landscape, thereby reducing wind erosion of the sand.

The Municipality's involvement in the 2009 Communities in Bloom initiative was a partnership between 56 groups and organizations as well as countless residents and staff members; the Municipality has continued its involvement and will take part in the national edition in 2011. The program serves to unite the community through beautification of the Municipality and environmental stewardship. The 'tidiness' element of the program included staff who maintain the tidiness and safety of the Municipality's assets (e.g., beaches, community centres, etc.); community groups that undertake clean-ups and the 'Trash Bash'; and commercial partners that take special interest in the condition of their business properties.

The pursuit of the 'environmental awareness' element has resulted in the Grand Bend and Port Franks marinas being awarded Blue Flag status, meaning that each has met certain high environmental and operational standards, and these are the first marinas in North America to receive this designation. In addition, the Municipality has earned a Blue Flag designation for the Grand Bend Beach and the Swimming Water Information Monitor [S.W.I.M.] at the beach provides water quality data in real time. The Municipality also utilizes green fertilizers in lieu of cosmetic pesticides, as well as naturalizing some green spaces, through the reintroduction of native plant species; this will also help reduce maintenance costs. Residents also have access to the Pinery Provincial Park, which contains and preserves much of the remaining Oak Savanna woodland in North America.

'Greening' the Beachgoing Experience

As society becomes more environmentally aware, the beachgoing experience is one that many are seeking to 'green', by way of instituting more environmentally sound practices when visiting coastal lands. The Daily Green, a website that promotes environmentally conscious living, made the following suggestions for an eco-friendly beach outing⁸:

- use existing pathways or walkover/bridge structures to reduce erosion;

⁸ Muzaurieta, Annie B. (n.d.). 7 ways to make your beach outing eco-friendly. Accessed from <http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/eco-friendly-beach-outing-44062008> on February 8, 2011.



- bring reusable cutlery, cups and napkins (but not glass) or recycled and/or recyclable products;
- use public restrooms and clean up after pets to reduce bacterial deposits;
- use green practices at home, as what is sprayed on the lawn, flushed down the toilet or drain, and thrown in the garbage can end up in lakes, rivers and oceans;
- dispose of trash in appropriate receptacles and cut plastic rings to protect birds and fish; and
- join a beach, river, stream or ocean cleanup group.

The need for increased 'green' practices is becoming more apparent all the time; the Lake Huron Binational Partnership, which was formed in 2002 by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Environment Canada, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ontario Ministry of the Environment, suggests that "concern has increased in recent years about human-related activities degrading beach water quality along the coast." The Municipality is closely monitoring water quality at the Grand Bend Beach.

Financing and Partnerships

According to Statistics Canada (2006), in 2004, Canadian municipalities spent an average of 12.3% of their annual budget on recreation and culture and the Canadian Federal government spent 2% of its annual budget on this industry. In other words, the bulk of the financing for this sector in Canada is derived at the local level. Municipalities are looking to other opportunities, aside from the traditional methods (i.e., property taxes and user fees), to raise revenues for recreation and culture.

Many communities are pursuing partnership approaches that differ from traditional service delivery mechanisms. Partnerships, alliances and collaborative relationships of varying types are required in today's economy to effectively and efficiently provide for the leisure needs of citizens. Not only is there growing interest in public-private partnerships (P3s), but also in arrangements with Trusts acting on behalf of community organizations and formal operating or cost sharing relationships with school boards as well as user/community groups. A 2006 survey that investigated the level of support amongst Canadians for P3s, found that 9 out of 10 Canadians believe that Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments are not keeping pace with demand for new or improved public infrastructure services⁹. Furthermore, 72% agree that P3s should be used in the recreation sector to improve or create new facilities and programs. The challenge is to create relationships that provide mutual benefit to those involved in the partnerships while protecting the interests of those affected by them.

The Municipality of Lambton Shores maintains a number of partnerships with community organizations, including the following: Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority; Grand Bend Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism; Pinery Provincial Park; St. Clair Region

⁹The Canadian Council for Public Private Partnership (2006). Trends in Canadian Support for Public Private Partnerships. Available online at: <http://www.pppcouncil.ca>.



Conservation Authority; and Tourism Sarnia-Lambton. Both the Municipality and the broader community recognize that they must work collaboratively to meet local needs and leverage available resources; these approaches must continue to be nurtured and expanded over time. Examples of fundraising partnerships include (but are not limited to): the Grand Bend Community Foundation and the Grand Bend Rotary Club (for the Grand Bend Beach elevator and S.W.I.M. system).

Volunteerism

In many communities that are home to natural heritage parks and/or waterfronts, volunteer groups are often involved in the cleanup, maintenance, fundraising and/or environmental stewardship. These volunteers are often heavy users of the park or beach themselves and choose to 'give back' by protecting and maintaining the asset for the enjoyment of future users. Within Lambton Shores, the 'Friends of the Pinery Park' have been in existence since 1989, and have grown to offer a variety of organized activities at Pinery Provincial Park, including:

- Conducted walks/hikes;
- Canoe hikes (paddles on the Old Ausable Channel);
- Bike hikes (guided bike tours of the park);
- Children's programs;
- Aquatic discovery programs;
- Evening programs (e.g., films, talks, music, etc.);
- Organized school and adult education programs; and
- Winter volunteer ski patrol.

The Grand Bend Community Foundation (GBCF) is also a voluntary organization that was established to manage funds from the sale of the Public Utilities Organization. The GBCF provides grants and community leadership to groups including Friends of Pinery Park, Rotary Club, Grand Bend Area Community Health Centre, etc. The important roles played by volunteers within these organizations and others are vital to the management of community leisure opportunities.

Volunteers are essential to the operation of a large number of leisure programs, including special events and programs for children, and many municipalities rely heavily on their assistance. The 2007 *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* has indicated that volunteerism is rising slightly, but the Consultant's experience in several communities suggests that many leisure organizations still face challenges in finding volunteers. One key result of the national survey was that 18% of the volunteer hours in Canada are in the sports and recreation sector, which is the highest of all sectors. However, while 46% of Canadians (15 years or older) volunteered in 2007, it must be noted that the absolute average volunteer hours per year decreased from 168 hours per year to 166 hours. Hours volunteered by those between the ages of 15 and 24 has doubled from 29% in 2000 to 58% in 2007, perhaps largely due to the recent addition of mandatory volunteer hours for high school students, as part of high school curriculum. The Municipality of



Lambton Shores celebrates its volunteers with a volunteer recognition barbecue each September, with approximately 200 volunteers attending in 2009. Over 100 community organizations operate within the Municipality, many of which rely on the work of volunteers as they are managed as non-profit entities. Their services range from safety, to recreation and culture, beautification, and special events, all of which are aimed to improve the quality of life in Lambton Shores. The community search conference conducted for the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan revealed some concern about volunteer burnout and the impending shortage of volunteers as the population ages.

Festivals and Special Events

The Grand Bend Beach is currently home to a number of festivals and special events, organized by community groups, including Aquafest (Grand Bend Environmental Committee), Canada Day celebrations (Grand Bend Area Chamber of Commerce), and Burgerfest (Optimist Club of Grand Bend). Municipalities often seek to take advantage of 'multiplier effects' from both tourism and local spending when facilitating special events. Festivals and special events are often reflective of the community, create a sense of local pride, build traditions, encourage community involvement, and offer a greater variety of leisure opportunities. Additionally, festivals and special events have increasingly been marketed outside of communities to draw tourists in to capitalize on the success of established local events. These events contribute to the overall well-being of a community by encouraging social interaction within the public realm. The provincial government's 'Celebrate Ontario' initiative provides funding to festivals and events at one of three levels (up to \$50,000; up to \$100,000; or up to \$400,000) dependent upon the event's operating budget. The Federal Government has also pledged \$30 million annually to support Canadian festivals.

Promotion of Tourism

In addition to its other recreation offerings, a community's unique environment and history are significant factors in attracting visitors and creating a sense of community. Waterfront tourism is the primary form of tourism in Grand Bend as the beach is the main attractor. Parks, beaches, attractions and events are all part of the tourism infrastructure, although this may not always be the primary aim of these activities and facilities, and there may not exist sufficient amenities to sustain a large number of visitors (e.g., parking, washrooms, etc.). The challenge faced by municipalities is getting people to stay overnight in the municipality to gain economic benefits from hosting these events and maintaining these spaces. The Municipality of Lambton Shores' Strategic Plan identifies a thriving tourism economy, the inclusion of ecotourism as a key component of its economic strategy, as is the desire to have the municipal marinas to remain major components of its tourist economy.

In addition, cultural tourism has been identified as one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, generating a broad appeal due to its experiential, educational and emotional components. The Lambton Shores area is home to a number of cultural events and venues (e.g., Aquafest, Canada Day celebrations, Huron Country Playhouse, Esli Dodge Conservation Area amphitheatre,



etc.), which serve to enhance the tourist experience for those that are interested. Statistic Canada's Travel Attitudes and Motivation Survey (TAMS) identified the following emerging trends with respect to arts and culture: growth in the Bed and Breakfast industry and other forms of 'romantic' dining and lodging; opportunities to experience new and different cultures; interest in historical experiences such as attending historical sites and re-enactments; increased popularity of concerts, festivals and live art; and continued interest in art galleries and museums.

Demand for Ancillary Amenities

Within the parks systems (most notably beaches and outdoor sports fields), municipalities are dealing with demands for higher quality amenities, such as washrooms, drinking fountains, concessions, etc. With newer and more stringent standards, municipalities have also been devoting significant resources to playground upgrading. The Municipality has addressed some of these needs at the Grand Bend Beach, with the recent addition of the playground and splash pad, as well as by providing a concession, washrooms, changerooms, viewing platform, seating, shade covering, etc. In addition, as the population ages and people become more aware of the benefits of environmental protection, demand for more passive settings that connect people to nature is increasing. Education and public awareness of environmental and beach-specific issues are increasingly becoming essential components of resource management strategies through interpretive signage, education on etc. and certain municipalities now encourage residents to take an active role in maintaining healthy ecosystems by offering environmental-based programming and outreach initiatives as a new area of service. The use of dune grass as an anti-erosion method on the Grand Bend Beach is an example of the integration of environmental features and preservation efforts into a public open space area.

Beach Operating Practices from Waterfront Communities

As an element of the background research undertaken for this Initiative, interviews were conducted with representatives from a number of Ontario waterfront communities (Town of the Blue Mountains, Municipality of Central Elgin, Town of Cobourg, Municipality of Kincardine, City of Kingston, Town of Saugeen Shores, City of Sarnia, and Town of South Bruce Peninsula). The goal of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the best practices within other municipalities, through discussions about operation, partnerships, beach activities, barriers to effective beach management, human resources practices, and other issues deemed important. The data collected through this exercise is not intended to be prescriptive for the Municipality of Lambton Shores, but rather, to provide an overview of how similar communities are operating and maintaining their beachfront property. The key issues raised by these municipalities can be found below, with discussion regarding the Municipality of Lambton Shores articulated where appropriate.

Parking at the beach emerged as an important topic, specifically the need for additional parking spaces to accommodate a growing number of beachgoers, particularly on long weekends. Many municipalities provide at least some free parking.



- In Grand Bend, there is paid parking near the beach, and free parking is located approximately 700 metres from the beach. Additionally, metered onstreet parking spaces are available along Main Street which also serve the local businesses along the strip.

Beach rental policies varied among the communities, with some requiring that renters sign formal agreements regarding the responsibilities of each party. Within other municipalities, the beach is not available for rental or there is not a guarantee of exclusivity for events (e.g., parties, weddings, etc.). Bayfest (a weeklong concert series) is an exclusive, ticketed event held at the City of Sarnia's waterfront Centennial Park in partnership with other organizations; however, Sarnia's Canatara Beach Park also has a bandshell available for rent for local concerts during daytime hours.

- The Municipality of Lambton Shores charges rental fees for using the beach for special events, but does not guarantee exclusivity.

By-law enforcement was mentioned as an issue, as many municipalities felt that despite their strong parks by-laws and policies governing appropriate uses, they lack the required human resources to adequately enforce them.

- The Municipality of Lambton Shores has limited numbers of Community Services staff in addition to two by-law officers, while there are also two seasonal Harbour Masters, one for each of the Municipality's two marinas.

Grooming of beaches was viewed differently by different municipalities, as one municipality grooms its beach daily with a tractor-pulled surf groomer, while some groom four times per summer (prior to each long weekend), and the remaining others groom by hand with rakes. The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation recommends that aside from 'spring cleaning', no additional mechanical grooming should be done to the beach, including leaving 'strand lines' of organic matter that wash up on the beach.

- Debris is cleaned off the Grand Bend Beach in late Spring, followed by combing of the top six inches of sand by the beach sifter, which picks up items that are half an inch or larger in size. The beach sifter is then used on an as-needed basis during May and June, and is subsequently used every day in the summer between Father's Day through to Labour Day (daily at the Main Beach, every other day at the South and the North Beaches). In addition, a volunteer group helps with debris cleanup four times per summer, just before and after each long weekend.

Partnerships and agreements are common among municipalities with waterfronts. For example, the Town of The Blue Mountains allows Ryerson Film School to use the beachfront for student coursework provided that the Town is held harmless of liability and proof of insurance is given by the Film School. In Port Stanley, GTs restaurant leases beach lands upon which they operate sand volleyball courts, resulting in a positive relationship between the municipality, the private enterprise and the general public. In addition, many municipalities have environmental stewardship groups that help with beach maintenance, educational efforts, and in some cases, programming. The Town of South Bruce Peninsula has a number of partnerships, including a unique Committee of Council that



includes representatives of the following groups: full-time residents; cottagers; island property owners; kiteboarders; canoers; kayakers; Ministry of Natural Resources; Grey Sauble Conservation Authority; and the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation. This committee discusses issues pertaining to the beach and makes recommendations to Council.

- The Municipality of Lambton Shores does not have any formal partnerships for delivery of services on the beach, but does have relationships with the Grand Bend Community Foundation and the Rotary Club of Grand Bend, as well as the United Church group that volunteers their time to assist with beach debris cleanup before and after each summer long weekend. Other groups, such as the Friends of the Pinery and Lambton Wildlife Inc., have an interest in the natural environment and riparian areas.

Environmental education was mentioned as an important element of beach management in many communities. In particular, it was mentioned that informing the public about environmental initiatives is an important step in building and maintaining community understanding of the issues affecting the beach and providing a platform from which the Municipality can seek input and support for future initiatives.

- The Rotary Club of Grand Bend has erected signs near the beach house as part of its Clean Water Now campaign to explain the importance of keeping the water clean. In addition, the community profile book compiled for the 2009 Communities in Bloom project includes explanations about the tree and dune grass plantings, the S.W.I.M. program, and a number of other environmental initiatives.

Public Consultation Programme

The Grand Bend Beach Research and Consultation Initiative has involved a number of consultation efforts, including:

- Community Visioning Session (October 2010);
- Community Feedback Survey (available online and in hard copy from October 2010 through December 15th, 2010);
- Interviews (including staff and the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority); and
- Public Information Meeting (March 2011).

Community Visioning Session Summary

On October 16th, 2010, a Community Visioning Session was held at the Grand Bend Recreation Centre. The session was attended by 42 people, including representatives from Council, municipal staff, local businesses, media, the Chamber of Commerce, and community associations. The session was conducted by MONTEITH BROWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS with the purpose of providing a venue within which



members of the community could share ideas and listen to the perspectives of others. Participants also discussed what they value about the Grand Bend Beach, its future role, appropriate public beach activities, and who should be providing activities and services at the Grand Bend Beach. Attendees were invited by the Municipality based on their interest in the beach; the session was also open to the public.

Participants were seated at tables with other stakeholders; each table was asked to respond to a series of questions. The first question asked what participants value most about the Grand Bend Beach, as well as what role they thought the beach should play in the overall recreation and leisure landscape of Lambton Shores. In addition, participants were asked what specific activities are appropriate for the beach and who should provide activities and services at the Grand Bend Beach. Results have been summarized below.

Question One: What do you value most about the Grand Bend Beach?

The natural setting and scenic beauty of the beach were the most common responses, followed by a desire to leave the beach as it is now. The sunsets, sand and clean water were all mentioned as key elements of the natural environment at the Grand Bend Beach, which was also perceived to be a globally significant area. The non-commercial nature of the beach was appreciated by many, while tourism was also mentioned as an important aspect of the beach. Active and passive play and recreation and the family-oriented nature of the beach were also valued. While musical and cultural events were mentioned as being important, so too were having few events that use large sections of the beach and the opportunity for passive enjoyment of the area. In all, the beach is a source of community pride and the overriding sense is that the natural beauty of the Grand Bend Beach is its most highly valued aspect.



Question Two: What role should the Grand Bend Beach play in the overall recreation and leisure landscape of Lambton Shores?

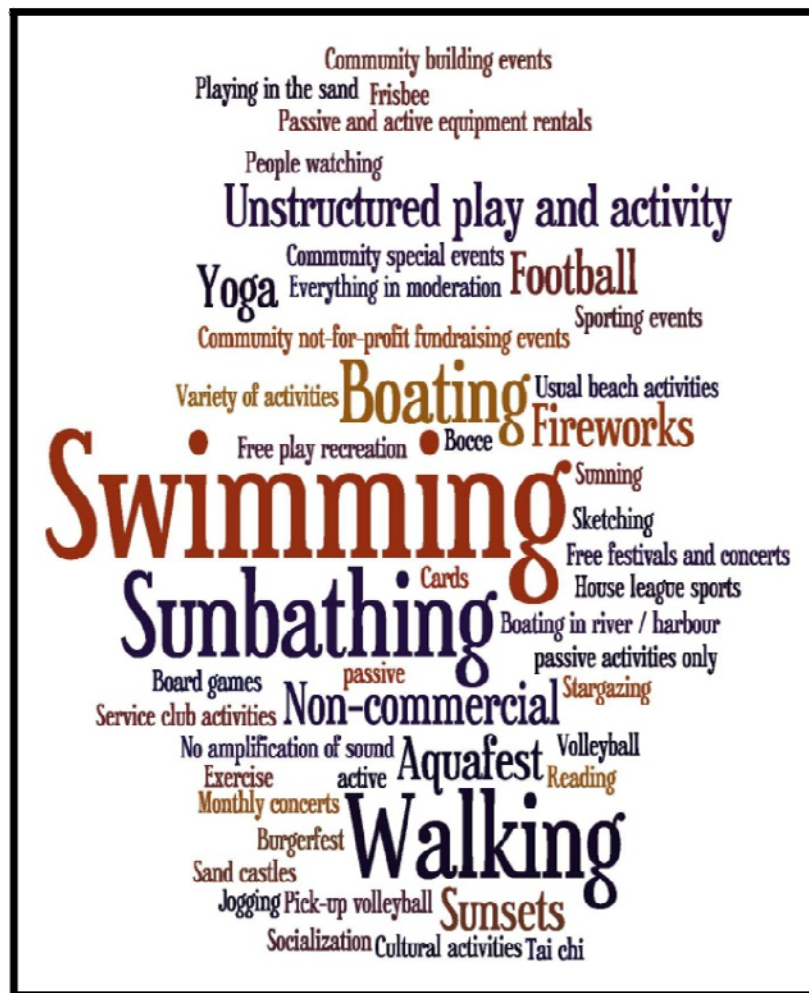
A variety of responses was given when discussing the role of the Grand Bend Beach, ranging from the provision of a balance of active and passive uses to protection from commercialization. The beach as a place for families to gather (including mid-week tourism opportunities) and its role in economic development were also mentioned. While a role as a venue for active uses was mentioned, the preference was for unorganized, impromptu free play and pick-up activities (e.g., bocce, volleyball, Frisbee, etc.). In addition, the preservation of the natural environment and the international recognition of the beach were mentioned, along with the preservation of the historical significance of the Grand Bend Beach. The role of the beach as a venue for cultural activities and festivals that benefit the community was also discussed.

Question Three: What specific activities are most appropriate for the beach?

The adjacent graphic illustrates the activities mentioned by attendees; the larger the text in the graphic, the more often the response was given (i.e., larger words/phrases were mentioned by a greater number of people).

As can be seen in the graphic above, the most common responses were swimming, sunbathing, walking, boating, football, Aquafest, non-commercial uses, fireworks, yoga, unstructured play and activity, and sunsets.

Specific Uses Deemed Appropriate by Participants





Question Four: Who should be providing activities and services at the Grand Bend Beach?

The general conclusions were that it should be permitted to not-for-profit groups, service clubs, advisory groups and volunteers rather than the private sector that provides activities and services at the Grand Bend Beach. A few participants suggested that for-profit groups should provide activities and services. Other suggestions included the imposition of time and space restrictions on activities (e.g., once per month on regular weekends and minimizing the use of the sand beach for events), enhancing parking and having the Municipality manage issues including cleanliness, maintenance, signage, lifeguards, insurance, enforcement of by-laws, etc.

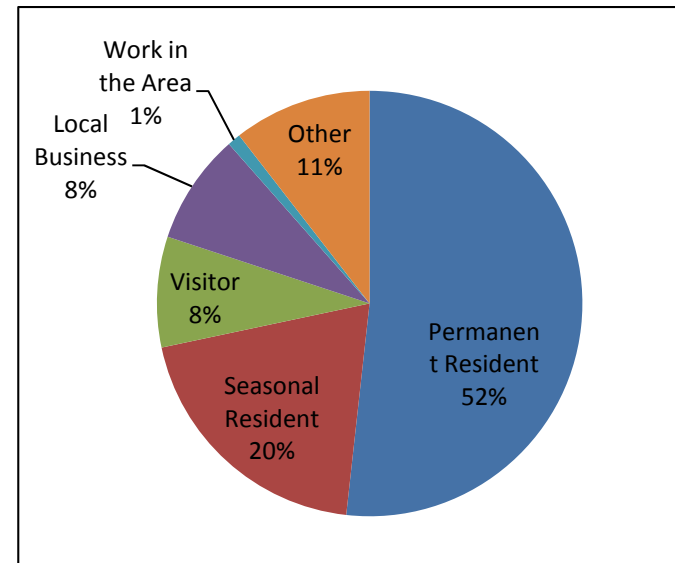
Community Feedback Survey (online and hard copy)

The Community Feedback Survey, which was available both online and in hard copy, asked respondents a number of qualitative and quantitative questions, including: demographics; frequency and type of household beach use; satisfaction with specific beach elements; vision for general beach uses; physical, program and service improvements to the Grand Bend beach area; the frequency with which certain activities should be allowed on the beach; opinion questions; and personal reflections on Grand Bend beach. A total of 288 responses were received, though it is noted that results are not considered to be 'statistically' significant, due to the following factors: the survey was not random; the survey was available on the Internet, making it impossible to ensure only one entry was completed per person; and there was no way to accurately ensure statistical representation of the population of Lambton Shores; results are summarized below.

Demographics

Respondents to the online survey were largely permanent residents of the Grand Bend area (52%), with an additional 20% being seasonal residents. The remainder of respondents classified themselves as 'other' (11%) including residents of Ipperwash, year-round cottagers, property owners, future residents, and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce; visitors (8%); local businesses (8%); and those who work in the area but live elsewhere (1%). Of the 288 respondents, the largest percentage was from Grand Bend (60%), followed by Forest (13%), Port Franks (6%), Kitchener/Waterloo (3%), and London (3%). 19 other Ontario communities were represented, as well as Vancouver and two cities in Michigan. The majority of respondents (56%) reported their age range as 55-69 years of age; 35-54 year olds were the second most common respondents at 31%. With respect to the age of household members (which could include

Residency of Respondents



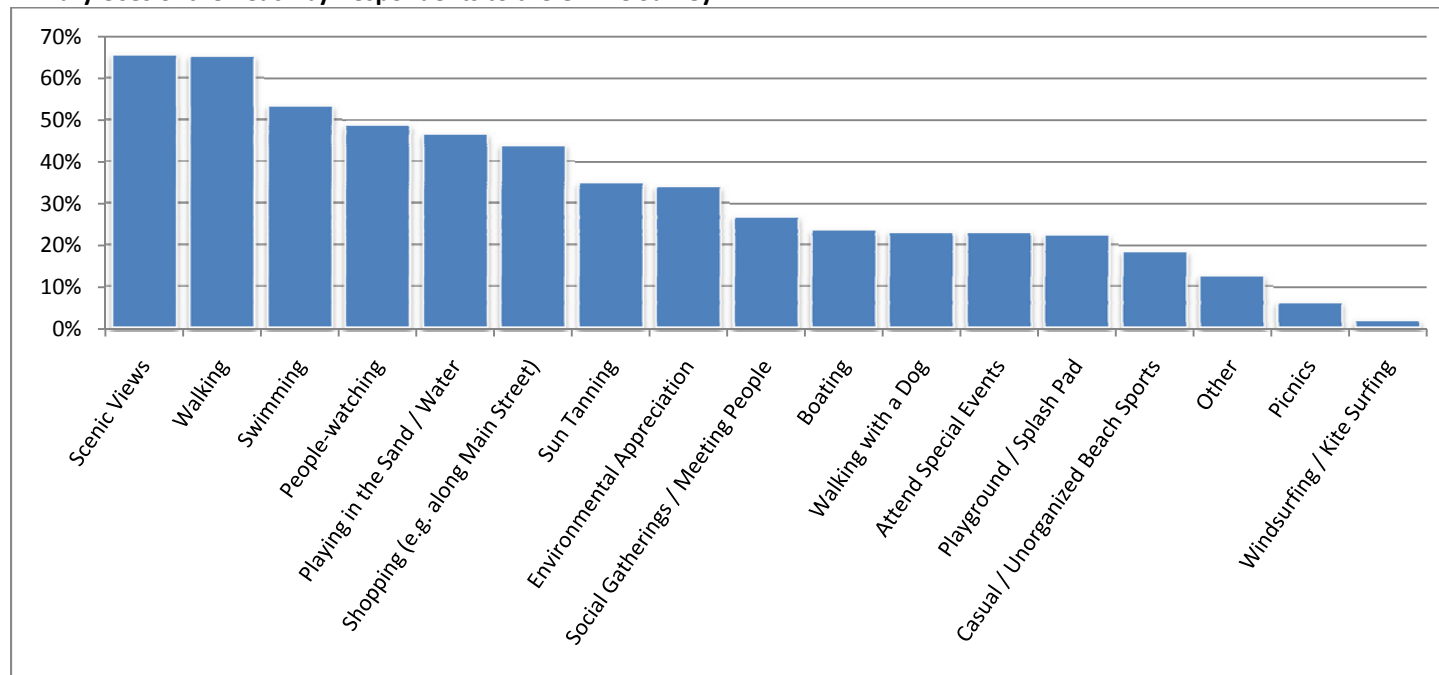


seasonal visitors, permanent residents, etc.), the most common age range was again 55-69 year olds (60%), followed by 35-54 year olds (43%) and 20-34 year olds (29%).

Beach Use

When asked if they or anyone in their household had visited the Grand Bend Beach in the past two years, an overwhelming 99% said yes; 56% of whom reported using the beach thirteen or more times per year. Respondents were asked to list the top three things they value most about the Grand Bend Beach area. There was a wide variety of valued elements of the Grand Bend Beach area, ranging from tangible facilities (e.g., splashpad, playground, washrooms, boardwalk, pier, benches, etc.) to natural beauty (e.g., sunsets, Lake Huron, etc.) to activities (e.g., Aquafest, fireworks, municipally-sponsored activities, etc.) to maintenance and safety (e.g., lifeguards, few beach pollution closings, clean beach, clean streets, regularly emptied garbage cans, etc.) to recreation opportunities (e.g., walking, volleyball, people-watching, etc.) to the people. With respect to activities undertaken at the beach by respondents and members of their households, a list of options was provided, with the following chart showing the results. The most common responses were scenic views, walking, swimming, people-watching and playing in the sand and water.

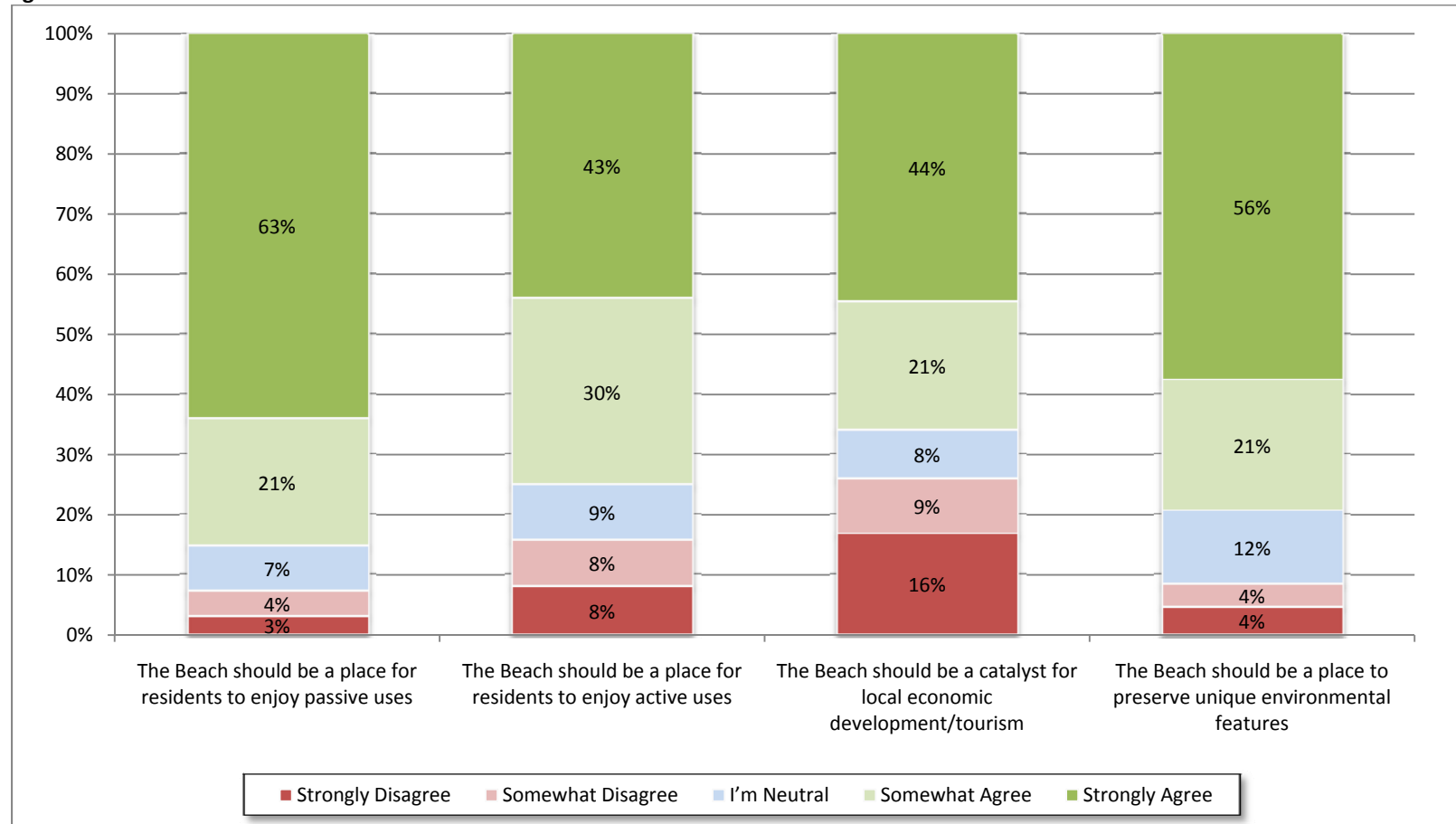
Primary Uses of the Beach by Respondents to the Online Survey





'Other' responses included dining, kayaking, fishing, organized volleyball, wildlife viewing, etc. There are a variety of opinions on what activities are appropriate for a public beach. Respondents were asked to rate the beach as a place for active, passive, economic, and environmental preservation uses; results are illustrated in the following chart.

Agreement with Statements of Preferred Beach Uses



For each statement, respondents most often strongly agreed, illustrating the variety of uses and roles of the beach that are deemed appropriate by residents and visitors alike. The survey also asked how frequently a number of activities should be held at the beach.

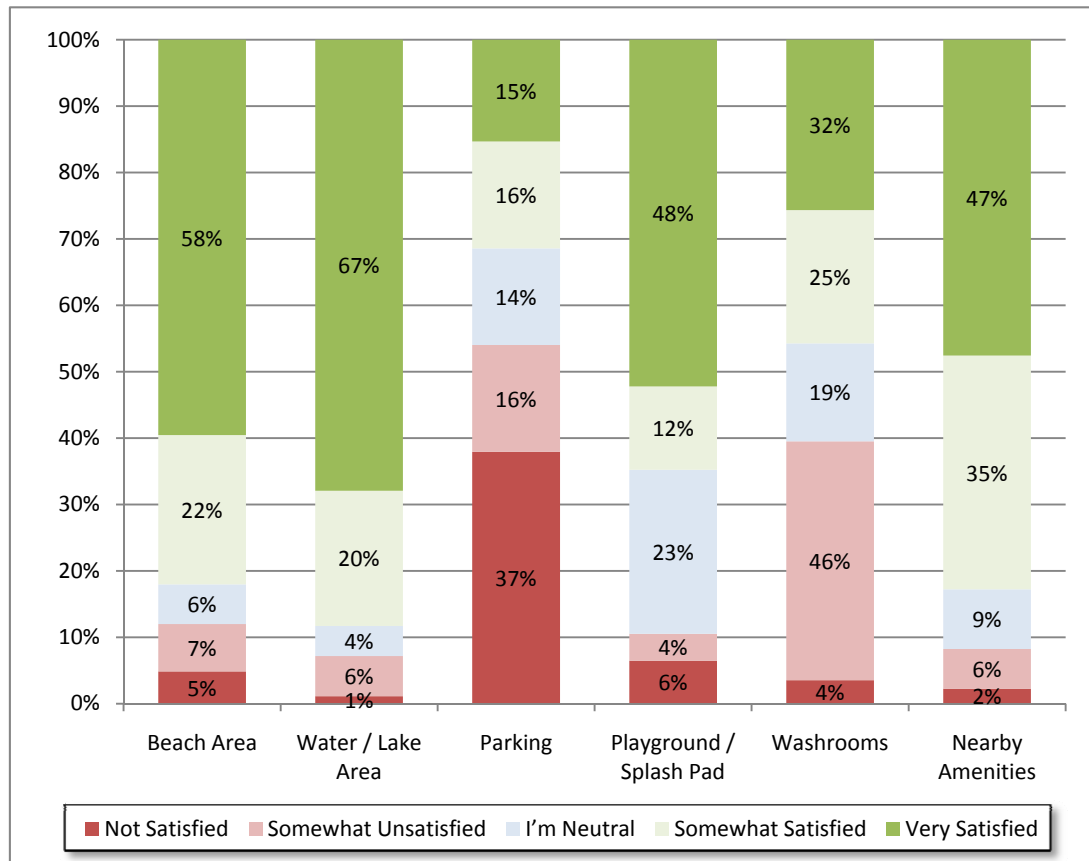


The findings were that concerts (39%) and community special events / gatherings (41%) were deemed most appropriate once per month, while camps or clinics (42%), volleyball tournaments (35%), and other sport and recreation tournaments (36%) were preferred to not take place on the beach at all. Active living programs were found to be appropriate once per week by 24% of respondents, and not at all by 21%.

Elements of the Grand Bend Beach Area and Potential Improvements

In 2008 and 2009, the Municipality of Lambton Shores undertook a series of improvements to the Grand Bend Beach area and the Main Street of the community (details provided in the Infrastructure subsection of this Research and Consultation Initiative). Respondents were asked if additional improvements were required, and if so, what physical, program and service improvements that should be undertaken. In order to gain an understanding of respondents' views of the existing infrastructure, survey participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with specific beach elements. Overall, the majority of respondents are very satisfied with all elements except parking (53% somewhat or not satisfied) and washrooms (50% somewhat or not satisfied). 87% were satisfied in some form with the water / lake area, 80% of respondents were satisfied with the beach area, 82% with the nearby amenities, and 60% with the playground / splash pad.

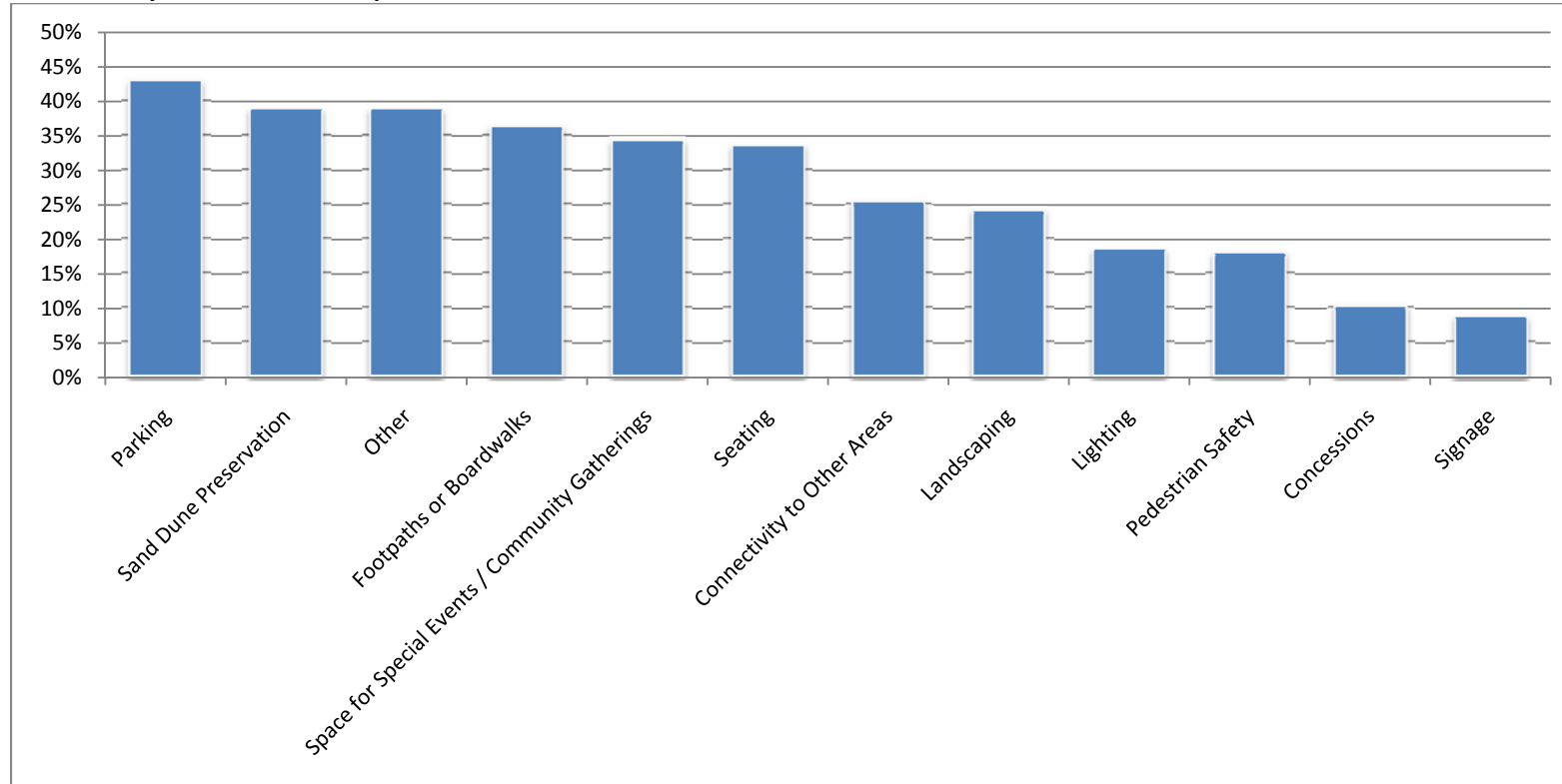
Satisfaction with Elements of the Grand Bend Beach Area





Respondents were also asked whether further improvements (above those completed in 2008 and 2009) were needed in the Grand Bend Beach area, and then were asked what physical, program and/or service improvements were required; multiple responses were allowed. With respect to physical elements, 54% of respondents felt that no further improvements were required, 38% felt that further improvements were required, and 8% responded 'don't know'. With respect to each potential area of improvements, respondents were given a list that included an 'other' option in which they could write in any suggestions not already included. Parking was the most commonly selected physical element in need of further improvement, with 43% of respondents identifying it; sand dune preservation and 'other' were each mentioned by 39%. Examples of the 'other' physical elements that require additional improvements include shade areas, landscaping maintenance, free parking, the South Beach area, bike paths, offsite parking, consideration for the addition of another route into the community, and there were also those who reiterated that no improvements are required.

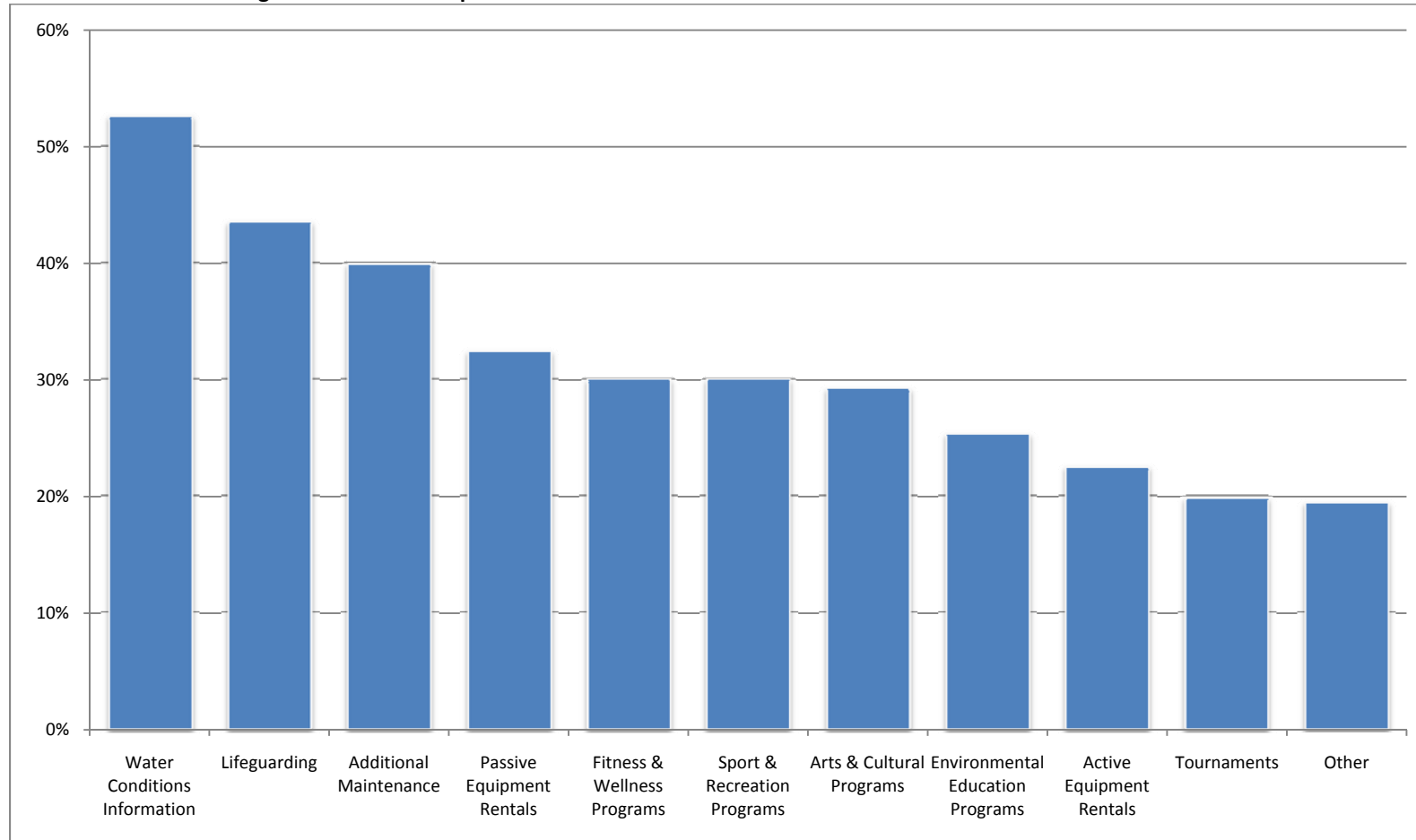
Preferred Physical Beach Area Improvements





With respect to program and service improvements, water conditions information (53%) was the most commonly selected area for improvement, followed by lifeguarding (44%), additional maintenance (40%), passive equipment (e.g., beach chairs, umbrellas, beach balls, etc.) rentals (32%), fitness & wellness programs (30%), and sport and recreation programs (30%). 'Other' program and service improvements include lower parking rates, washroom maintenance, better access for persons with disabilities, night patrols, longer season for open washrooms, and once again, there were respondents who reiterated that no improvements are required.

Preferred Beach Area Program and Service Improvements

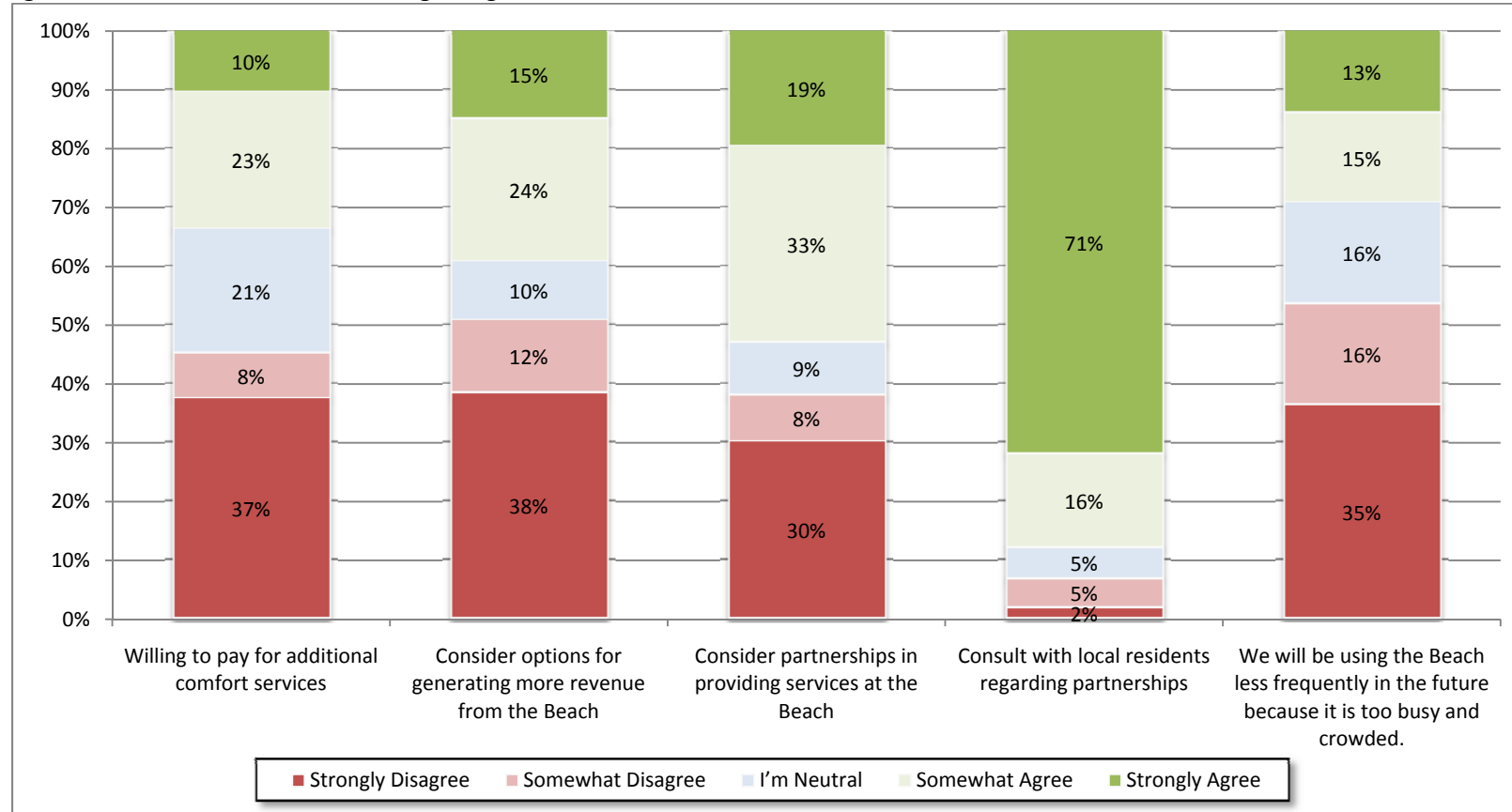




Opinions and Personal Reflections

Survey respondents were asked about their level of agreement with a series of five statements as noted on the following chart:

Agreement with Various Statements Regarding Beach Use



An overwhelming percentage of respondents (87%) somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the Municipality should consult local residents regarding partnership opportunities.

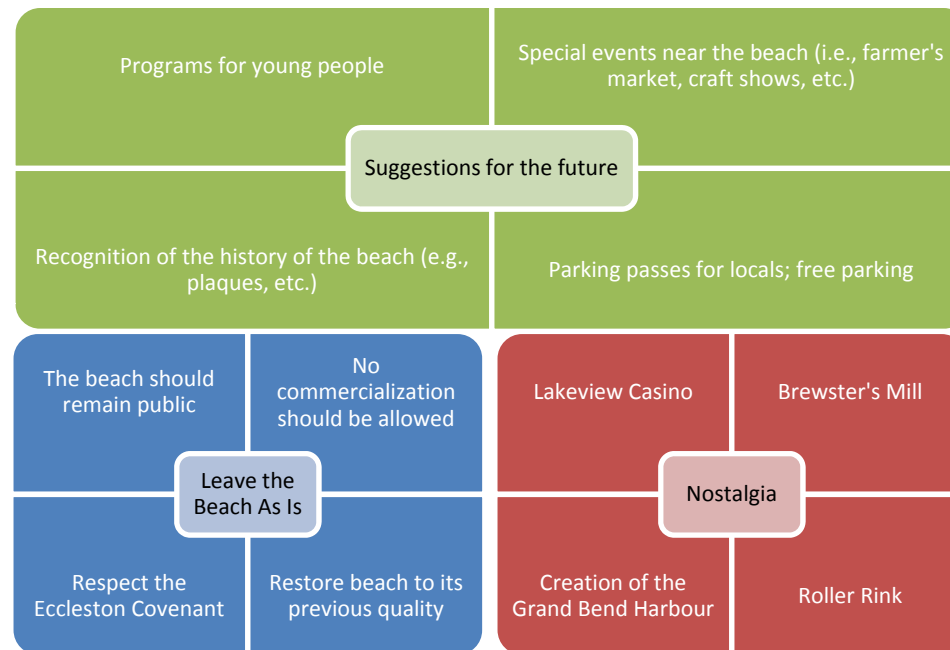


Between 38% and 51% of respondents somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each of the other four statements:

- Willing to pay for additional comfort services;
- Consider options for generating more revenue from the Beach;
- Consider partnerships in providing services at the Beach; and
- We will be using the Beach less frequently in the future because it is too busy and crowded.

This suggests that revenue-generating activities are not a priority for many respondents, and that the prevailing opinion is that the beach is not overcrowded.

The final question on the survey was a fully open-ended request for personal reflections on the Grand Bend Beach area. Responses were varied, and included reminiscences of past experiences, suggestions for future use, and comments and concerns regarding current use. Some key themes and examples are outlined below; the Municipality has been provided with a fully detailed summary of the online survey results, and these responses have been considered through the needs assessment process.





Public Information Session Summary

On March 24, 2011, a public information session was held at the Grand Bend Legion to offer an opportunity for residents, business owners, municipal representatives, and other interested parties to review display boards outlining the key recommendations of the Initiative, discuss areas of concern and/or kudos with the Consulting Team, and to provide comment on the Grand Bend Beach Research and Consultation Initiative. Approximately 100 people attended the public information session, providing a wide range of feedback; the most frequently mentioned issues (receiving at least four separate mentions) are listed below:

- Support for commercial events;
- Need for more frequent beach grooming than the recommended twice per week;
- No desire for commercialization;
- Provision of a shuttle from potential future parking areas;
- Signage needs;
- Need for more public washrooms, including those that are open during the off-season; and
- Ongoing dialogue with local residents.

These comments, as well as all others received, have been reviewed by the Consulting Team to inform the Research and Consultation Initiative. In many cases, these comments provided insight into areas of the report which required clarification prior to project finalization.



Needs Assessment

Strategic Framework

The role of the Grand Bend Beach was defined following the identification of a number of key themes that emerged through public consultation, background research, and a review of beach management practices in other communities (both locally and abroad). These themes reflect the breadth of impact of a beach, as well as the importance of balancing ecological and economic factors. Once these themes were extracted, the role of the Grand Bend Beach was delineated. The themes were as follows:

Natural Beauty

- The Grand Bend Beach is a naturally beautiful municipal asset enjoyed by residents and tourists alike.

Cleanliness

- The cleanliness of both the beach and the water are important to the continued viability and value of the Grand Bend Beach.

Economic Development & Tourism

- The Grand Bend Beach is one of the Municipality's greatest attractors for employment, tourism and seasonal residents.

Accessibility

- All residents and visitors, regardless of ability, are welcomed and able to access the Grand Bend Beach and its amenities.

Recreation

- Recreation is a key element of the Grand Bend Beach.

Special Events

- Community-level special events that do not threaten the ecological well-being of the beach itself are important economic drivers.

Environmental Sustainability

- The environmental impact of beach activities should be considered when determining whether they are appropriate. Ongoing environmental remediation (e.g., dune grass plantings, etc.) is essential for the long-term health of the Grand Bend Beach.



These themes are reflected within the defined role of the Grand Bend Beach, as each emerged as a crucial element in the composition of a municipal beach for seasonal and permanent residents and visitors alike. The role statement was crafted after careful consideration of background research, best practices, experience in other communities, and the input received through consultation with staff, Council, community groups, and permanent and seasonal residents.

The role of the Grand Bend Beach is to provide a clean and naturally beautiful environment within which residents and visitors alike can appreciate their natural surroundings while safely partaking in a meaningful range of recreational activities and community events, while at the same time supporting Municipal economic development objectives and local businesses.

This role definition should assist the Municipality in assessing activities or partnerships proposed by staff or outside organizations, in that it provides a general overview of the principles that govern the ongoing management of the Grand Bend Beach. This often dichotomous role of balancing tourism and ecology can be difficult to manage, but with vigilance and commitment to the interests of economic development through tourism, environmental awareness, and protection of a natural resource, the Municipality of Lambton Shores is well positioned to oversee the management of the Grand Bend Beach.

The Concept of Beach Management

The definition of beach management which has been utilized within this Research and Consultation Initiative is that, “beach management seeks to maintain or improve a beach as a recreational resource and a means of coast protection, while providing facilities that meet the needs and aspirations of those who use the beach.”¹⁰ This definition encompasses many of the guiding principles and is in agreement with the description of the role of the Grand Bend Beach. In the context of this Initiative, management

¹⁰ Bird, E.C.F. (1996). Beach management John Wiley & Sons: Chichester and New York.



and operation of the Grand Bend Beach should consider each of the Guiding Principles as elements of a total beach management plan. Sound beach management can lead to the following positive outcomes¹¹:

- Effective utilization of a socio-economic and ecological resource;
- Tourism;
- Increased quality of recreation opportunities;
- Enhanced protection and sustainable development of coastal regions; and
- Assistance with monitoring, regulation, planning and decision-making efforts.

The impact of the beach on the Municipality of Lambton Shores is great, largely through its power to draw tourists, seasonal residents, and other visitors to the area, as well as providing access to Lake Huron for local residents. The importance of recreation to the economy of the Grand Bend Beach should not be underestimated, yet little research exists in this area; much of the research to date on beaches focuses on the scientific aspects (e.g., erosion, coastal dynamics, etc.), legal issues, and storm protection. Each of these areas impact upon the ability of a beach to serve as a tourism destination, but the actual recreational and tourist use of beaches is a relatively untapped area of research. However, Bird (1996) explored two areas of consideration: existing and future beach usage. Current demand for a beach should be considered, but caution should be taken with this measurement as it is difficult to maintain accurate counts of beachgoers at a publicly accessible beach that does not charge an admission fee. Anecdotal accounts from the online survey undertaken for this Research and Consultation Initiative suggest that long weekend beach traffic has been decreasing. The Municipality is able to track visitors through parking meters, with each kiosk giving a daily interaction count. Although this does not account for all visitors, it does provide a figure against which the Municipality can assess general growth or decline in visits to Grand Bend. Therefore, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to track the daily interactions at each parking meter within the municipal parking lots and on Main Street in Grand Bend to monitor beach visits. This will allow the Municipality to compare trends in visits from summer to summer, as well as on long weekends versus regular weekends, etc. to determine needs for additional amenities, maintenance efforts, etc.

The 2010 Draft Budget for the Municipality of Lambton Shores reported that the Grand Bend Beach accounts for 3.05% of the Municipality's overall business unit allocation in terms of staff time; this places the beach as the 8th largest of 16 units. Recreation and Leisure Services represents an additional 6.24% and Harbours were 0.51% of the business unit allocation, each of which are closely related to beach management. As such, with many municipal departments directly or indirectly involved in the management and operation of the Grand Bend Beach, its role within the Municipality has not been as clearly defined as it could be, which has partly served as the impetus for this Research and Consultation Initiative.

The Needs Assessment will explore the following areas of interest with respect to the Grand Bend Beach:

¹¹ Williams, A.T. & Micallef, A. (2009). Beach management: Principles and practice. [online resource].



- Aspiring to be a world class lakefront beach;
- Infrastructure (including signage, parking, comfort facilities);
- Ecological and environmental issues; and
- Partnerships.

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to track the daily interactions at each parking meter within the municipal parking lots and on Main Street in Grand Bend to monitor beach visits. This will allow the Municipality to compare trends in visits from summer to summer, as well as on long weekends versus regular weekends, etc. to determine needs for additional amenities, maintenance efforts, etc.

Uses of the Grand Bend Beach

A variety of beach uses and their environmental, economic and tourism impacts upon the Grand Bend Beach have been discussed through this Research and Consultation Initiative. The range of current and desired future uses reported through consultation efforts suggest that non-commercial, unorganized, casual uses are preferred by the majority of respondents; the five most commonly mentioned uses from the online feedback survey undertaken for this Project (in order) were scenic views, walking, swimming, people-watching, and playing in the sand and/or water. These are all 'traditional' non-commercial beach uses that require very little intervention on the part of the Municipality, aside from ensuring the safety of the beach area. As previously mentioned, there are a select few special events organized by community organizations that take place at or near the Grand Bend Beach. These are non-commercial events; however, the definition of 'non-commercial' as events that are organized by community organizations and do not have the goal of making a profit may not be sufficient to determine acceptable and non-acceptable uses. Additional criteria for non-commercial events should include the time of year (e.g., summer vs. winter), day of the week, time of day, and location used (e.g., parking area, sand, etc.). The 2008 Community Development Master Plan recommended lengthening the shoulder seasons around the busy summer season; this recommendation may support the hosting of additional community events at the Grand Bend Beach in the late Spring and early Autumn. Currently, Aquafest is hosted by the Grand Bend Community Foundation in early August and utilizes a relatively small portion of the Main Beach, in front of the roundabout at the base of Main Street. This event is run on a regular weekend (as opposed to a long or holiday weekend) and is free to attend. Burgerfest is held in the parking lot next to the beachfront condominium at the north end of the Main Beach in mid-June and costs \$5 to enter, with proceeds going to the Grand Bend Optimist Club. These events are community-driven and utilize minimal amounts of beach area on non-holiday weekends, which serves to draw people to Grand Bend on weekends that might otherwise attract fewer visitors.



In the past, the Grand Bend Beach has played host to large scale beach volleyball tournaments hosted by private companies, which were not well received by many local residents but attracted significant attendance, and generally supported by local businesses as these events were identified as a boon to the local economy. The online survey conducted for this Research and Consultation Initiative found that 42% of respondents felt that camps or clinics should not take place on the beach at all, while many respondents felt that beach volleyball tournaments (35%) and other sport and recreation tournaments (36%) were preferred to not take place on the beach at all. Although organized sports were not supported by the majority of respondents, casual active use (e.g., swimming, playing in the sand, unorganized beach sports) were deemed acceptable by many. The Community Visioning Session supported these findings, as the general consensus was that drop-in active recreation would be welcomed on the Grand Bend Beach, provided there was not profit being garnered from the activities and they were truly non-commercially driven. As mentioned in the Infrastructure subsection of this Research and Consultation Initiative, the Municipality should consider the addition of four sets of beach volleyball net posts to a location to be determined to provide an opportunity for casual sport participation. In addition, the Municipality has supported the provision of yoga / Pilates on the observation deck of the Beach House on occasion in the past. The Municipality's Strategic Plan identifies a commitment to offering a broad range of recreation and leisure programs; it is recommended that the Municipality continue to support the provision of active living programs on the observation deck of the Beach House (preferably during non-prime hours). This will provide a small amount of additional revenue while supporting the Municipality's dedication to active living and the health of its residents.

With respect to prime and non-prime hours at the beach, prime hours are defined as dawn to dusk between Father's Day and Labour Day, as well as weekends beginning with Victoria Day. In the past, Grand Bend was home to a great deal of non-prime activity, particularly when the Lakeview Casino and the dancehall were in operation. These venues served as attractors for tourists as famous performers (including Louis Armstrong and Guy Lombardo) were regularly featured. Although these venues are no longer in existence, opportunities may exist for similar activities that may be hosted on the beach itself, on the rooftop of the Beach House or on Main Street. As such, it is recommended that the Municipality develop a policy that will prohibit events on long weekends (Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday, and Labour Day), but will allow up to two commercial events (maximum of 3 days per event) on the Main Beach during prime season, provided the ecological health of the beach is respected, the event not take up a large portion of the beach, and the event be affiliated with a Lambton Shores community group and/or business. The actual policy could discuss decibel limits, permitted square footage to be used, etc.) The proposed partnership framework (which can be found in the Partnerships subsection of this Research and Consultation Initiative) should be utilized to ensure that the Municipality's best interests are served by the relationship. In addition, it is recommended that activities, events and other commercial ventures that take place in Grand Bend, but off-beach, should be supported by the Municipality, in part for their potential to draw visitors to the beach area.

For 2011, private beach rental rates are \$218.25 per day (plus hydro at \$109.25 for the initial day of rental and \$32.80 for each subsequent rental day. As discussed within this Report, limited commercial use of the Grand Bend Beach and rentals to private citizens and community groups (provided the natural ecology of the beach is not threatened by the event) are deemed acceptable uses. The



frequency with which these events are to take place will depend greatly on the number of requests received, as well as the nature of the events. The Municipality of Lambton Shores has already determined its beach rental rates through the next three years, which currently are reasonable for events organized by community-based no-profit organizations and private citizens. As such, it is recommended that the Municipality revisit the beach rental rates following the 2012 summer season, taking into account the frequency and type of rentals that occur over the next two years. The review process for the beach rental policy and rates should include advertisement seeking public input for 30 days on the Municipality's various social outlets (e.g., municipal website, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as well as at municipal facilities. Comments from the public will be accepted prior to the policy being finalized, similar to the process undertaken when the Municipality developed the Lambton Shores Municipal Alcohol Policy.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores focus use of the beach as a venue for unscheduled, spontaneous active and passive recreation opportunities.

It is recommended that the Municipality revisit the beach rental rates following the 2012 summer season, taking into account the frequency and type of rentals that occur over the next two years.

It is recommended that the Municipality adopt the following definition of prime time with respect to the Grand Bend Beach: dawn to dusk daily from Father's Day weekend through Labour Day weekend, as well as weekends from Victoria Day through Father's Day, inclusive.

It is recommended that the Municipality develop a policy that will prohibit events on long weekends (Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday, and Labour Day), but will allow up to two commercial events (maximum of 3 days per event) on the Main Beach during the prime summer season, provided the ecological health of the beach is respected, the event not take up a portion of the beach considered to be detrimental to non-event usage (as deemed by the Municipality), and the event be affiliated with a Lambton Shores community group and/or business.

It is recommended that activities, events and other commercial ventures that take place in Grand Bend, but off-beach, should be supported by the Municipality, in part for their potential to draw visitors to the beach area.

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to support the provision of active living programs on the observation deck of the Beach House (preferably during non-prime hours).



Sand Volleyball

Sand volleyball is generally a popular beach activity, and many municipalities include volleyball courts in their inventories. In some cases, organizations may rent these facilities to provide league and/or tournament play. In others, the net posts are there in the event someone is interested in putting up a net and playing a pick-up game. Participation in sand volleyball is a popular summertime beach activity and should not be entirely banned from the Grand Bend Beach. To facilitate casual participation in sand volleyball, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores install four sets of beach volleyball net posts at the Grand Bend Beach (locations will need to be evaluated. Signs should be posted stating that the courts are operating on a first-come-first-served basis and should be vacated after 1 hour if other users are waiting.

In the past, large-scale beach volleyball tournaments that have taken place on the Grand Bend Beach have been the source of some controversy as these tournaments bring numerous tourists to the Municipality, but there is some concern that the amount of economic impact is not balanced with the environmental well-being of the beach. As sand volleyball is not required to take place on a beach, the Municipality should consider providing sand volleyball courts at an area away from the beach (e.g., Klondyke Park); as an example, the City of Guelph's Herb Markle Park is adjacent to the Speed River, but does not have a beach, yet has a sand volleyball court. Grand Bend is home to Klondyke Park, which is currently home to 5 soccer fields, and was recommended as a preferred site for an additional soccer field and a potential site for a ball diamond in the 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan. In addition to nets for casual play at the Grand Bend Beach, it is recommended that the Municipality consider Klondyke Park as a possible location for sand volleyball courts (minimum of four courts to maximize maintenance efforts due to co-location) that may be used for casual play or organized use; further consultations will need to be undertaken with beach volleyball providers to confirm the suitability of Klondyke Park as a long-term sand court venue.

Recommended Actions

To facilitate casual participation in sand volleyball, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores install four sets of beach volleyball net posts on the Grand Bend Beach; potential locations will need to be assessed.

It is recommended that the Municipality consider Klondyke Park as a possible location for sand volleyball courts (minimum of four courts) that may be used for casual play or organized use.



Aspiring to be a World Class Lakefront Beach

What constitutes a world class beach? Access? Environmental responsibility? Beautiful sunsets? The criteria may well be different for each person and for each type of beach, but these overall qualities enhance the reputation of, and interest in, a beach. Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a “nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities”. PPS suggests that the following qualities that contribute to creating a great waterfront destination¹², which provides an excellent overview of values embraced globally by waterfront communities. The checklist provided on the following page includes mention of those areas within which the Municipality of Lambton Shores is excelling as well as areas that could use improvement or attention.

Checklist Component	Grand Bend Discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfront buildings should boost activity in the public spaces around it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beach House draws people as a centralized public space through washrooms, concession, splash pad, playground, observation deck, etc. Main Street buildings contribute to success of the beach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limits are placed on residential waterfront development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential properties are located near to the beach, but beach ownership is municipal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative programming and smart use of amenities and lighting contribute to a flexible waterfront space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting special events and active living programs near the beach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible design fosters adaptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has not directly been addressed, although the nature of the beach as a ‘blank canvas’ for passive and active recreation provides a level of flexibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative amenities boost enjoyment of the waterfront 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community gateway is eye-catching, garbage cans are located throughout the beach area and the layout of the Main Beach allows for a broader range of uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfronts should be accessible by means other than private vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the Grand Bend Beach is most often accessed by private vehicles, local residents and cottagers often walk or ride to the beach; the boardwalk provides a pedestrian walkway and bike racks at the Beach House
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local identity, history and culture should be honoured to create a unique sense of place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grand Bend Beach is home to a rich history (e.g., casino, prohibition, etc.) that distinguishes it from other beaches; this is an area for potential improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water should be the centrepiece for programming and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The natural use of the water as a venue for swimming, boating, etc. is apparent; the Grand Bend Harbour provides boaters with dedicated space for entering and exiting the water as well as storing watercraft

¹² Project for Public Spaces. (n.d.). 10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination. Accessed from http://www.pps.org/articles/10_qualities_of_a_great_waterfront on January 12, 2011.



Checklist Component	Grand Bend Discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centrepiece buildings serve a variety of functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Although newly constructed, the area that includes the Beach House, concession, observation deck, playground and splashpad is a focal point for Grand Bend
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good management maintains community vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The community input received throughout this Research and Consultation Initiative have hopefully begun an ongoing dialogue amongst interested and invested parties, but there is room for improvement and growth; this Initiative has also compiled the community vision from this input as well as that of municipal staff, elected officials, and the general public

Adapted from Project for Public Spaces. *10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination*.¹³

While there are beaches that receive international acclaim (e.g., Miami Beach in Florida, Bondi Beach in Sydney, Venice Beach in California, Barceloneta Beach in Barcelona, Ipanema Beach in Rio de Janeiro, etc.), these beaches are on a much larger scale than that of Grand Bend and should not be considered in the same class. The aforementioned beaches are oceanfront beaches that are generally much larger than the Grand Bend Beach and other lakefront beaches, and are located in areas that experience year-round high temperatures that allow for traditional beach visits. As such, the goal of the Municipality of Lambton Shores should be to position the Grand Bend Beach as a world class lakefront beach. The difficulty with this goal is that this 'ranking' will be largely subjective and dependent upon a number of factors, ostensibly allowing the Municipality to define what constitutes a world class *lakefront* beach; it is suggested that the guiding principles developed for this Research and Consultation Initiative serve as the basis for this definition. As previously stated, the guiding principles have been pulled from a variety of background research, consultation and best practices, suggesting that they provide a solid foundation upon which to build a world class lakefront beach that may serve as the standard for other Ontario beaches in the future. As such, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores strive to satisfy the items on the checklist adapted from the Project for Public Spaces (including components such as placing limits on residential waterfront development, promoting access to the waterfront by means other than private vehicles, maintaining community vision through good management, honouring local identity, history and culture, etc.) to the greatest degree possible to achieve standing as a world class lakefront beach.

The PPS criteria should also be considered when defining a world class beach. The Municipality of Lambton Shores is already meeting and/or exceeding many of the PPS criteria, but there is room for improvement, particularly with respect to the showcasing of local identity and access to the beach area by various modes of active transportation. The boardwalk, which was recently added as part of the Grand Bend Beach renovation, provides active transportation opportunities on the beach itself, but the most common mode of transportation seems to be private vehicle. Many local cottagers and other seasonal residents likely walk or ride to the beach because

¹³ Project for Public Spaces. (n.d.). *10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination*. Accessed from http://www.pps.org/articles/10_qualities_of_a_great_waterfront on January 12, 2011.



they live nearby, but concerns have been raised through consultation about the safety of walking to the beach. Main Street is the primary walkway to the beach, and has sidewalks on both sides, but there are few other options for walking to the beach (e.g., Oak Street and Beach Lane, which do not have sidewalks). In addition, the residential area located southeast of the North Beach does not offer on-street parking for visitors.

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores strive to satisfy the items on the checklist of components of a world class lakefront beach (including items such as placing limits on residential waterfront development, promoting access to the waterfront by means other than private vehicles, maintaining community vision through good management, honouring local identity, history and culture, etc.) to the greatest degree possible.

Blue Flag Programme

Although PPS does not specifically mention environmental awareness and attention as an element of a high quality waterfront, the cleanliness and environmental responsibility displayed at a beach are key elements of its attractiveness and safety. The standard for world class beaches, with respect to environmental responsibility, is the Blue Flag Programme, which began in 1985 in France, was adopted by an additional 10 European countries in 1987, and began spreading globally in 2001. The Blue Flag award is given to beaches and marinas that meet specific criteria regarding environmental education / information, water quality, environmental management, and safety and services; beaches must satisfy 32 criteria and marinas must comply with 24 criteria. The Municipality of Lambton Shores was the first in Canada to achieve Blue Flag status when, in 2009, its marinas successfully satisfied the programme's criteria. This accomplishment is significant as it illustrates the Municipality's status as a world class lakefront community.

Blue Flag criteria cover issues ranging from the display of information about water quality and the Blue Flag programme to the cleanliness of the beach and water, to the provision of toilet / restroom facilities (including those that are accessible to individuals with disabilities), to the existence of pollution emergency plans and available first aid equipment at the beach. For Blue Flag marinas, the imperative criteria include offering the Individual Blue Flag for boat owners, the existence of an environmental policy and plan for the marina, proper maintenance of all buildings and equipment, a map indicating the location of the different facilities, and visually clean water. The annual process for attaining or retaining Blue Flag status involves submitting information about the beach or marina, which prompts a visit from a staff member from Environmental Defense, following which the Municipality is given a report with municipalities being notified in June of each year as to their success in achieving Blue Flag status for the season. Beaches and marinas must maintain Blue Flag standards year after year to maintain Blue Flag status. It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to strive to maintain Blue Flag Status at the Grand Bend Beach, as well as at Port Franks Marina and Grand Bend Harbour.



In partial fulfillment of the Blue Flag beach criteria, the Municipality undertakes the following exercises at the Grand Bend Beach, among others:

- Displaying information about the Blue Flag Programme at the beach and marinas;
- Testing the water at the Grand Bend Beach at prescribed frequencies;
- Maintaining a clean beach and facilities, including accessible restrooms and changerooms;
- Providing an adequate number of lifeguards and lifesaving equipment; and
- Recycling bins are available on the beach.

One project that added to the Municipality's original application for the Grand Bend Beach to become a Blue Flag site is the award-winning Lambton Shores Swimming Water Information Monitor (S.W.I.M.). The S.W.I.M. monitors water quality, clarity, temperature, and wave height, among other information, which is sent in real time to the Grand Bend Harbour office. The S.W.I.M. project began in 2007, with the intention of running for at least five years to determine if there was a need for remedial action to improve the water quality at the Grand Bend Beach. This project was awarded the Annual Ontario Consulting Engineering Award of Excellence in 2008. The water sampling data collected by the County and the additional testing undertaken by the Rotary Club is posted to the Municipality's website.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to strive to maintain Blue Flag Status at the Grand Bend Beach, as well as at Grand Bend Harbour and Port Franks Marina.

To ensure continued accuracy of water quality readings, it is recommended that the Municipality continue its use of the Lambton Shores Swimming Water Information Monitor (S.W.I.M.).

Infrastructure

Impact of the Community Design Plan and Grand Bend Beach Enhancement Project

The Municipality of Lambton Shores currently provides a number of amenities at the Grand Bend Beach. Construction took place between September 2008 and June 2009 on a number of features at the Grand Bend Beach, including the following:

- A new boardwalk that is accessible to persons with disabilities and emergency responders;
- Planting areas and trees, including the reintroduction of natural species to serve as a wind and sand barrier between the water and the parking areas;



- Stormwater management through limited paving, the use of porous materials in the parking lots, using stormwater for plantings, and limiting the use of chlorinated water for plantings;
- Accessible splash pad and playground;
- Low energy lighting options throughout the beach facilities, including LED lighting fixtures and reducing light pollution while maintaining safety; and
- Shade structures including a gazebo, umbrellas near the concession and splash pad, and tree plantings.

The Grand Bend Beach House, playground and splash pad are co-located at the base of Main Street. The Beach House was constructed as part of the improvements made for the 2001 Canada Summer Games, which were co-hosted by a team of communities called the 'London Alliance', including the City of London, City of St. Thomas, City of Woodstock, and the Village of Grand Bend (note: the planning period for the Canada Games took place prior to amalgamation). The Beach House (which actually includes two separate structures) houses the concession, 10 women's washroom stalls (including 1 accessible); 5 men's washroom stalls; 5 urinals; 2 male changerooms; 3 female changerooms; a 24-hour indoor washroom (one toilet and one sink); observation deck (including elevator for access); storage closets; emergency generator; lifeguard office; and a utility room. Washrooms are open annually from Victoria Day weekend through to October. The Municipality has done an excellent job of maintaining this facility and as such, the Beach House appears to be in good condition to this point, with minor refurbishments planned for 2012 (including replacing toilets). It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to monitor the general condition of the building, identifying life cycle maintenance and improvement requirements, including projected costs to be incorporated into the municipal budget for the year of completion. It should be noted that the Grand Bend Harbour and the pier are federally owned.

As discussed within the trend on water safety earlier in this Report, water safety is an increasing concern, particularly among natural waterfront areas (e.g., lakes, rivers, streams, ponds and waterfronts). The Grand Bend Beach has four lifeguard towers (three on the Main Beach and one on the North Beach) and the Municipality provides lifeguard-supervised hours throughout the summer, in addition to maintaining the lifeguard office at the Beach House. The Lifesaving Society's 2004 Waterfront Safety Standards provides a list of required emergency equipment at all supervised waterfronts; the Municipality recently undertook a beach audit which confirmed that these requirements are being met. As such, it is recommended that the Municipality ensure it continues to fulfill the following requirements provided by the Lifesaving Society for Ontario waterfronts: dedicated emergency phone with posted emergency numbers; rescue aid for each lifeguard; at least 2 buoyant throwing assists with buoyant lines; at least 2 reaching poles; at least one spineboard with effective immobilization system; at least one Number 2 first aid kit; designated first aid area; and rescue craft if the swimming area extends more than 50 metres from shore.

The splash pad and playground are both fully accessible for children with disabilities (although the playground also has separate climbing apparatus that is not accessible), as the splash pad is open concrete with ample space between water features, and the playground is equipped with wide ramps and many features are at ground level, thereby making them accessible to children in



wheelchairs. The Municipality currently employs a playground inspection and replacement program, which the 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan recommended continuing; it is recommended that the playground at the Grand Bend Beach continue to be included among the inventory of municipal playgrounds that are part of this assessment program and upgrades and repairs should be undertaken as deemed necessary by these inspections. With respect to the splash pad, it is recommended that the Municipality should continue to undertake regular inspections to ensure the concrete is free from chipping and cracks and water features are in good working order; any issues should be addressed as soon as possible. The online survey undertaken for this Research and Consultation Initiative found that the majority of respondents (60%) were satisfied with the playground, washrooms and splash pad; however many survey respondents and attendees at the Community Visioning Session suggested that the South Beach would benefit from the addition of a portable toilet (see 'World Class Lakefront Beach' subsection for a discussion on this topic).

The concession stand was contracted to a non-municipal company until the summer of 2010, when the Municipality of Lambton Shores assumed control. This additional income financially assists the Grand Bend Beach without having to rely solely on tax dollars to sustain operations. Charging for parking at all municipal lots on the beach side of Highway 21 is another method by which the Municipality can support the costs of managing the operations at the Grand Bend Beach.

In addition to these beachfront facilities, the Municipality has developed a Harbour Sustainability Plan for Port Franks Marina and Grand Bend Harbour. The Sustainability Plan provides guidance regarding greening cleaning supplies and bathroom products, installing high efficiency lighting and low flow shower heads and faucets, as well as loaning bicycles to boaters while they are docked and creating an educational program for boaters. Educational sessions have included topics such as safe boating, naturalization and invasive species, and have been offered in partnership with the Ausable-Bayfield Conservation Authority. It is recommended that the Municipality continue to implement and follow the guidance provided within the Harbour Sustainability Plan at Grand Bend Harbour.

As previously mentioned, in 2007, the Municipality of Lambton Shores hired EDA Collective, Inc. to undertake a Community Design Plan that focused on each individual community (Arkona, Forest, Grand Bend, Port Franks, Thedford) and also at the Municipality as a whole to ensure that a standardized approach is utilized in the design of Lambton Shores. The reconstruction of Main Street in Grand Bend was identified as a priority by Municipal Council as one of five recommendations (of 35 total) to be undertaken in 2009. The reconstruction included the repaving of Main Street, refurbishment, and in some cases, widening of sidewalks, and completing an upgrade of the traffic circle at the base of Main Street that was initially installed as part of the Grand Bend Beach Enhancement Project. Other recommendations from the Grand Bend section of the Community Design Plan (including details about those that have been addressed by the Municipality to date) include:

Community Design Plan (2008) Recommendation	Actions Undertaken by the Municipality and Partners
New parking layout and circulation to be addressed on Main Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roundabout added to base of Main Street• New accessible parking spaces added at the new King Street parking lot



Community Design Plan (2008) Recommendation	Actions Undertaken by the Municipality and Partners
Start building façade improvement program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A number of businesses are currently undertaking façade improvements
Create thresholds of arrival for Grand Bend from outer gateways to beach entranceways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Grand Bend Area Horticultural Society designed and landscaped an entryway sign for Grand Bend that reflects the waterfront as it is shaped like a lighthouse with a setting sun
Overhead wires need to be buried to open up Main Street visually and create an enhanced sense of appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">n/a
Better recreation and cultural amenities for the growing permanent population	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The addition of the splash pad, accessible playground and boardwalk benefit both residents and visitors
Create a BIA / Chamber of Commerce to execute and maintain goals for the downtown core	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Grand Bend and Area Chamber of Commerce has been established
Work with new and existing residential developments to ensure improvement of beach water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Grand Bend Community Foundation's Aquafest serves to educate the public about their impact upon water quality
Position Grand Bend to attract investment and encourage the redevelopment of Main Street properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Façade improvements are being encouraged
Improved pedestrian, vehicular and information signage and the appropriate placement of signage throughout Grand Bend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Yet to be addressed, but should be considered with Municipality-wide signage design in mind

Users of the South Beach are encouraged to make use of the accessible washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building (2 stalls for men and 2 stalls for women). This facility is in fair condition, but is in need of enhancement of existing facilities through refurbishment (could include painting, replacement of fixtures, replacing flooring, etc.) to address wear/use. The Municipality's 2010 Budget allotted \$2,125 for Grand Bend Harbour building repair; it is expected that significant renovations on this site would require additional funds. It is recommended that the Municipality refurbish the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building should the need arise as a result of increased patronage to the South Beach. It should be noted that there are also two washrooms located at the boat launch. While it is not recommended that the Municipality construct additional sidewalks to any roadways at this time, it is recommended that if, in the future, the Community Services Department is repaving streets near the beach, the addition of sidewalks should be considered if feasible in terms of space and financial requirements. In addition, public consultation revealed a desire for the boardwalk to be extended onto the North Beach; it is recommended that the Municipality allow emergency vehicle access and remove the physical access barrier to the North Beach.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to monitor the general condition of the Beach House, identifying life cycle maintenance and improvement requirements, including projected costs to be incorporated into the municipal budget for the year(s) of completion.



It is recommended that the Municipality ensure it continues to fulfill the following requirements provided by the Lifesaving Society for Ontario waterfronts: dedicated emergency phone with posted emergency numbers; rescue aid for each lifeguard; at least 2 buoyant throwing assists with buoyant lines; at least 2 reaching poles; at least one spineboard with effective immobilization system; at least one Number 2 first aid kit; designated first aid area; and rescue craft if the swimming area extends more than 50 metres from shore.

It is recommended that the playground at the Grand Bend Beach continue to be included among the inventory of municipal playgrounds that are part of this assessment program and upgrades and repairs should be undertaken as deemed necessary by these inspections.

With respect to the splash pad, it is recommended that the Municipality should continue to undertake regular inspections to ensure the concrete is free from chipping and cracks and water features are in good working order; any issues should be addressed as soon as possible.

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to implement and follow the guidance provided within the Harbour Sustainability Plan at Grand Bend Harbour (e.g., greening cleaning supplies and bathroom products, creating an educational program for boaters, etc.).

It is recommended that if, in the future, the Community Services Department is repaving streets near the beach, the addition of sidewalks should be considered if feasible in terms of space and financial requirements.

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores refurbish the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building should the need arise as a result of increased patronage to the South Beach.

It is recommended that the Municipality consider the feasibility of expanding the boardwalk to the North Beach area to allow emergency vehicle access and remove the physical access barrier to the North Beach.

Signage

The Municipality's 2008 Community Design Plan Final Report addresses the issues of wayfinding and signage as being imperative to the provision of a connected system of streetscapes and a sense of place across the entire Municipality of Lambton Shores. Specifically, the Community Design Plan suggests that proper signage "assists in reducing clutter, congestion and confusion." In addition, the Plan recommended "improved pedestrian, vehicular and information signage and the appropriate placement of signage throughout Grand Bend."



The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) provides a guide to the process of developing and designing a signage system, which has been adapted below as the recommended plan of action for the Municipality of Lambton Shores with respect to Municipality-wide signage; once decisions have been made on the signage system for the entire Municipality, discussions on how this will be reflected within Grand Bend may be undertaken. Initially, the Municipality should determine the purpose of the overall signage system (e.g., directional, informational, cautionary, heritage, etc.) and identify what signage exists in each community. Documenting existing signage to determine what is missing will provide the Municipality with a starting point from which to assess its signage needs. The next step will be to reach out to the community to gather input regarding resident and visitor needs with respect to signage (e.g., at what locations they feel signage is lacking, what information they are seeking from municipal signage, etc.). Once needs have been identified and public input collected, the Municipality should consider what historical and cultural landmarks and events to highlight through heritage signage. Grand Bend, for example, has been home to a number of historically significant structures and events, including the Lakeview Casino, which opened on July 29th, 1917, with Guy Lombardo as its first performer, to be followed in later years by the likes of the Glen Miller Orchestra, Tommy Dorsey, and Louis Armstrong¹⁴. Another example could be the site of Brewster's Mill, which was the first business in Grand Bend in the 1830s (long before the village was actually incorporated in 1951). Drawing attention to these sites and their historical significance will serve to enhance the experience of visitors and residents and may even attract some new tourism by those that are interested in historical interpretation. It is recommended that the Municipality identify a list of potential sites that have relevance to the history of Grand Bend, research the facts of each, and select for plaquing/signing those that are the most significant.

The creation of a signage master plan for the Municipality is the next step, and this document should identify what the needs and requirements are for informational, wayfinding, orientation, and identification signage. Specific plans for text, symbols, fonts, etc. should be included. Finally, potential signage designs should be tested with staff members, community groups, local residents, and visitors. This can likely be done online, providing access to the Municipality's seasonal residents dependent upon the time of year at which the consultation takes place. Potential signage should be evaluated in terms of phrasing, design, location, etc. and should align with the goals and purposes developed early in this process. It is recommended that the Municipality follow this signage planning process across the Municipality and all of its communities; it might be some time before any specific changes to Grand Bend happen, but undergoing the planning process will ensure that the Municipality's communities are on board with the overall design plan for signage. This undertaking will allow for standardized interpretive, directional, and branding signage, which will give visitors and residents alike a sense of community and continuity. The Municipality of Lambton Shores has experience in this area, as it undertook a similar process, albeit less involved, in the years following amalgamation (in 2001). Specifically, it is recommended that the Municipality ensure that signage is erected to provide directions to the three separate sections of the Grand Bend Beach (North, South and Main), to identify the location of the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building that serve the South Beach, as well as

¹⁴ (n.d.). Hillman-Rapley, L. Trading Places: Grand Bend. A Look Back, A Glance Forward.



locations of municipal parking lots and beach access points to make mobility through the community easier for visitors and residents. The Municipality began consulting community groups within each area (Arkona, Forest, Grand Bend, Ipperwash, Port Franks, Thedford) about 'community identity' signs that would let visitors and residents know when they were entering different area of the Municipality. Each community raised funds and took ownership of the design process to reflect the attributes of each community; for example, the Grand Bend sign is shaped like a lighthouse with the sun behind it, evoking thoughts of the waterfront at sunset. It is recommended that the Municipality revisit the discussions from this previous consultation effort, as well as from the 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, and this Initiative as a starting point for the overall signage planning process.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality identify a list of potential sites that have relevance to the history of Grand Bend, research the facts of each, and select for plaquing/signing those that are the most significant.

It is recommended that the Municipality follow the proposed signage planning process (including clarification of signage goals, surveying existing signage, understanding resident and visitor needs, identifying unique historical and culture aspects to be highlighted, developing a signage master plan, and testing potential signs) across the Municipality and all of its communities, including revisiting discussions from previous signage consultation efforts.

It is recommended that the Municipality ensure that signage is erected to provide directions to the three separate sections of the Grand Bend Beach (North, South and Main), to identify the location of the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building that serve the South Beach, as well as locations of municipal parking lots and beach access points to make mobility through the community easier for visitors and residents.

Parking

Parking in the Grand Bend Beach area is spread amongst six lots between Highway 21 and the beach. In total, there are 21 accessible municipal parking spaces and 629 standard municipal parking spaces within Grand Bend. In addition to the metered parking lots, there are two free municipal parking lots located above Highway 21, one behind the Legion off of Municipal Drive (40 standard spaces and 1 accessible space) and one located on Gill Road (29 standard spaces and 1 accessible space).

Input received for this Research and Consultation Initiative suggested that respondents are concerned about a lack of parking, as well as the cost to park, particularly for local residents. It was suggested by a number of respondents to the online survey that the Municipality provide a less expensive parking pass option for residents of Lambton Shores; the Municipality already does this, as it offers seasonal parking permits for paid lots for \$25.00 per season (April 15 – November 1) for property owners, while charging \$125.00 for all others. It is recommended that the Municipality continue to maintain paid parking lots on the beach side of Highway 21

to provide ongoing revenue to offset beach operating costs; it is also recommended that the Municipality continue to offer discounted seasonal parking passes to local property owners.

An option for acquiring additional parking spaces is to lease parking lands near the beach, as was recently done with the King Street Lot that added 26 spaces and offset the spaces displaced by the Main Street reconstruction. As such, the Municipality experienced a net gain of 22 spaces (including one accessible space) in the Main Street and beach area. While parking at the beachfront is currently limited to existing space, it is recommended that the Municipality consider acquiring further lands to be used for parking, whether through lease or purchase should the opportunity arise. In addition, the possibility of providing a shuttle bus from Klondyke Park or other potential parking sites should be considered as an option through which access to the beach would be opened up to more than just those that can park at the beachfront, particularly on long weekends (peak periods).

This action would potentially serve to entice more visitors to come to the Grand Bend Beach as they were less concerned about finding somewhere to park near the beach. A brief internet search found examples of a number of cities within which free (25¢ per trip in one case) beach shuttles are offered. For example, the Town of Cottesloe (near Perth), Western Australia, offers both daytime and night-time shuttle services, each funded by a different group; daytime service is funded by the Western Australia Public Transit Authority and the Town of Cottesloe, and night-time service is jointly funded by two hotels and the Town of Cottesloe. This may be an option for the Municipality of Lambton Shores, as many Main Street businesses have a vested interest in ensuring that tourism remains a primary economic driver for Grand Bend. In addition, input received for both this Research and Consultation Initiative and the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan showed a general willingness amongst business owners to participate in the revitalization of Main Street, and in turn, the Grand Bend Beach, potentially providing partnership

Municipal Parking Lots in Grand Bend





opportunities that should be explored through the use of the partnership framework proposed in the 'Partnerships' subsection of this report.

Lot	Location	Hours	Accessible Parking Spaces	Standard Parking Spaces	Cost
Beach	Beachside	6am – 11pm	7	200	\$3/hr or \$15/day
North Beach	Adjacent to North Beach	6am – 11pm	4	132	\$3/hr or \$15/day
North Beach (East Half)	Adjacent to North Beach	6am – 11pm	3	112	\$3/hr or \$15/day
King Street	King Street, between Huron and Woodward	6am – 3am	1	25	\$2/hr or \$10/day
Mid Town (formerly Eilber)	Eilber Road and Main Street	6am – 3am	3	60	\$2/hr or \$10/day
Ontario Street	Highway 21 and Main Street	6am – 11pm	1	31	\$2/hr or \$10/day
Legion	Municipal Drive	6am – 3am	1	40	Free
Gill Road	Gill Road and Crescent Street	6am – 11pm	1	29	Free
TOTAL	---	---	21	629	---

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to maintain paid parking lots on the beach side of Highway 21 to provide ongoing revenue to offset beach operating costs; it is also recommended that the Municipality continue to offer discounted seasonal parking passes to local property owners.

Although parking at the beachfront is currently limited to existing space, it is recommended that the Municipality consider acquiring further lands to be used for parking, whether through lease or purchase should the opportunity arise; should this parking area be further than one kilometre from the beach, the Municipality should investigate the provision of a shuttle service.

Ecological and Environmental Issues

From an ecological perspective, the waterfront in Lambton Shores (of which the Grand Bend Beach is a large part) is home to rare plant species, preservation efforts for significant sand dune environments, and a biodiverse aquatic ecosystem. A 2010 report by the Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy Core Team and the Lake Huron Binational Partnership sought to "identify what actions are needed to protect and conserve the native biodiversity of Lake Huron; the recommended strategies are meant to restore and conserve a functioning ecosystem." The report provides direction for the Canadian and American stakeholders with a vested interest in the Lake Huron basin and associated coastal ecosystems and 'nearshore zone'. The maintenance and support of these natural systems and



zones are of great importance to ongoing ecological balance in the region. The report, among many other recommendations, suggests that increasing “community engagement, awareness, understanding, and commitment” will be crucial to ensuring that residents and visitors alike are aware of the importance of the local ecological environment, as well as the impact of their actions upon it. For example, the report suggests that the public should be involved in decision-making processes and consensus building, as well as recommending that land owners should be made aware of the cumulative effects of their actions upon the coastal and nearshore ecosystems of Lake Huron. As such, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores be open to input from the general public with respect to major decisions regarding the Grand Bend Beach. This involvement is something that is also being sought by concerned citizens of Grand Bend. Through the involvement of the general public in the decision-making process, it will be advantageous to achieving buy-in and support for municipal initiatives related to the Grand Bend Beach in the future. This will ensure that permanent and seasonal residents, as well as visitors, have a say in the operation of the beach to which they feel intensely connected. In fact, through the non-statistically significant online survey conducted for this Research and Consultation Initiative, the final question asked respondents to provide personal reflections on the Grand Bend Beach; many people stated that their families have cottaged or visited Grand Bend for years, creating a strong sense of connection to the area. This passion for Grand Bend is powerful and should be nurtured through involvement in promoting the area as well as spreading environmental education efforts regarding ecological and environmental issues, including that of the importance of sand dunes and dune grasses.

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores be open to input from the general public with respect to major decisions regarding the Grand Bend Beach.

Sand Dunes and Dune Grasses

A sand dune is “a mound or ridge formed by the deposition of sand (which develop) when an abundance of sand combines with wind, vegetation and geography.”¹⁵ The Municipality of Lambton Shores is home to one of the most significant ecosystems along Ontario’s Great Lakes – the sand dunes along the eastern shores of Lake Huron. The dunes are extremely sensitive to human influence and damage, largely due to the fact that the sand that makes up the dunes is very fine and vulnerable to erosion once the anchoring vegetation (i.e., dune grasses and other plants) is damaged. The dunes along Lake Huron are the primary habitat for an endangered plant species called the ‘Pitcher’s Thistle’, which the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation states is only found on “the open sand dunes and low beach ridges of Great Lakes shores.” As such, although this plant is largely found in the Pinery Provincial Park and Port Franks area, its endangerment should serve as a warning and cautionary tale for the Grand Bend Beach with respect to dune conservation.

¹⁵ The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation. (Summer 2005). Port Franks: Sand Dune Conservation.



As part of the recent (2008-2009) Grand Bend Beach Enhancement Project, dune grass planting areas that serve as natural wind and sand breaks and to reduce erosion were created. In addition, a large area of dune restoration was established at the beach to serve as an educational tool regarding the benefits and purposes of sand dunes, as well as providing support for future dune reintroduction at other locations on the beach. While beach erosion is a natural occurrence that happens because of the movement of the tides and other coastal processes, human impact on dunes (e.g., ATVs, excessive trampling, etc.) can negatively impact this natural process, escalating erosion and beach damage. Potential causes of erosion or loss of sediment from a beach include sediment withdrawing to the lake bed, being washed or blown inland, drifting away, attrition, or quarrying¹⁶. To prevent sand losses to areas away from the shore (referred to as 'backshore'), the strategies of constructing solid structures and/or planting of vegetation are suggested in the literature on beach management¹⁷. Therefore, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue with this process of dune restoration and dune grass plantings to reduce unnecessary erosion and beach loss, provided that ample beach space is left for recreational purposes. In addition, the Municipality should promote the concept of single lane walkways from cottages to the water's edge through dune grass plantings and dunes to reduce human impact. Bird (1996) suggested that, "pathways across vegetated dunes may grow into blowouts...[and] fragile vegetation may need to be protected (fenced out) from public access, and walkways may have to be built to provide a means of reaching the beach." (p.216) The time and expense recently put into rehabilitating the dunes at the Grand Bend Beach through the planting of additional dune grasses suggest that the Municipality is interested in their protection; as such, the Municipality of Lambton Shores should consider the benefits of installing a wooden boardwalk at one or two access points in the North Beach area that are already being trampled by visitors to the beach. The cost of such an undertaking would have to be considered to determine whether it is a feasible option as opposed to the likely eventuality of replanting dune grasses. The Municipality of Lambton Shores currently moves sand that has been blown onto the North Beach back to the Main Beach once every 3-4 years, suggesting that the wind erosion of the sand has been substantial in the past. As the new dune plantings have only been in place for the past two years, it is unknown at this time whether the dune grass has been successful in reducing erosion; anecdotal evidence suggests that less sand is being seen on Main Street, suggesting that the dune grasses are having a positive impact.

The Municipality has erected snow fences within the area of dune grass planting to protect the sensitive grasses from human impact. The non-statistically significant survey undertaken for this Research and Consultation Report revealed that some residents find this to be an unattractive solution to the issue.

In the photograph on the following page, fourteen separate snow fenced areas can be seen on the water side of the developed beach infrastructure. These planting areas are important tools for addressing issues of beach erosion as well as providing educational opportunities on this topic. The original plan for these areas was to maintain fencing around them for three years (2011) to allow for adequate rooting to take place; however, the grass has not sufficiently anchored into the beach as yet, suggesting that at least one

¹⁶ Bryant, E. (2005). Natural Hazards (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo.

¹⁷ Bird, E.C.F. (1996). Beach Management. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



additional season is required before the fencing is removed. This will limit the threat to the grasses once they are no longer protected from beachgoers. Therefore, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores should remove the snow fencing that currently surrounds the Main Beach dune grass planting areas at such a time as the plantings have sufficiently taken root (to be re-evaluated by the Municipality prior to each summer season). Upon removal of the snow fencing, the Municipality should monitor the dune grass areas to ensure the plantings do not grow to cover a larger area than planned. In addition, it is recommended that the Municipality install educational signage near these dune grass planting areas to inform the general public about the importance of dune grass to the health of the dunes. The importance of education regarding sand dune preservation and reintroduction efforts will need to be a high priority for the Municipality. The Municipality also has permanent flower beds (located adjacent to the dune grass planting areas) that are currently surrounded by snow fencing and it is recommended that the Municipality replace the flower bed snow fences (near Beach House) with decorative fencing and add them to its maintenance roster for the long-term. Consultation efforts found a great desire by the public to be informed and involved at the early stages of any major future decisions regarding the Grand Bend Beach. For example, the online survey asked respondents to state their level of agreement with a number of statements, including, “the Municipality should consult with local residents prior to entering into any partnerships affecting the Beach.”



An overwhelmingly high percentage (87%) either strongly (71%) agree or somewhat (16%) agreed with this statement, suggesting that interested residents feel they should be involved in the decision-making process with respect to the Grand Bend Beach. There was a general view that was expressed through public meetings, the community visioning session and one-on-one interactions with some



residents of Grand Bend that their involvement in previous decision-making was not satisfactory. It should be noted that these consultation efforts were largely reactive to beach usage issues that stemmed from commercial events and/or partnerships with respect to the Grand Bend Beach. The public input tools utilized for both this Research and Consultation Initiative and the recently completed Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan have each tried to reach out to the local community, as well as the seasonal population through scheduling appropriate times for public meetings and the accessible online survey. This Research and Consultation Initiative has recommended that the Municipality continue to invite comment from the general public with respect to major decisions related to the Grand Bend Beach; it should be noted that the 2011 Recreation and Leisure Studies Master Plan supports this action through a number of recommendations.

Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue with the process of dune restoration and dune grass plantings to reduce unnecessary erosion and beach loss, while ensuring that ample beach space is left for recreational purposes.

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores remove the snow fencing that currently surrounds the Main Beach dune grass planting areas at such a time as the plantings have sufficiently taken root (to be re-evaluated by the Municipality prior to each summer season).

It is recommended that the Municipality install educational signage near the dune grass planting areas to inform the general public about the importance of dune grass to the health of the dunes.

It is recommended that the Municipality replace permanent flower bed snow fences (near Beach House) with decorative fencing and add them to its maintenance roster for the long-term.

Setbacks and Grooming

The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has jurisdiction over the Grand Bend Beach with respect to planning and setbacks from the water's edge. The ABCA must be consulted prior to construction of any structures (e.g., pergola, splash pad, buildings, etc.) on the beach to a simple horizontal setback from high lake levels established by the Flood Damage Reduction Program created by Environment Canada and the Ministry of Natural Resources in the 1980s. The purpose of this setback is to protect the beach and in turn, to protect the inland area from damage caused by blown sand by allowing the natural cycle of sand deposit and retreat to occur. The stance of the ABCA is that the Municipality should have regard for the natural processes of the beach, but it is also cognizant of competing interests in the beach, particularly those of tourism and environmental protection. The historical management of the Grand Bend Beach has involved grooming on a regular basis, which has led to an expectation of a graded debris-free beach amongst its visitors; however, the environmental well-being of the beach should also be considered.



The ABCA suggests that for beaches to perform their natural role of forming into wind and sand barriers for the inland areas, grooming should not be undertaken and naturalization should be the norm. It is understood, however, that tourism is a large draw for the Grand Bend area, as well as the Municipality as a whole; as such, the ABCA has allowed the Municipality the opportunity to groom the beach as it sees fit to satisfy its visitors, as it has for many years. To better balance tourism and environmental protection of the beach, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores reduce the frequency of its grooming of the Grand Bend Beach for the upcoming 2011 summer season. The Main Beach is currently groomed daily between Father's Day and Labour Day Monday; it is recommended that the Municipality monitor the Main Beach and the North Beach and groom each as needed (as opposed to a pre-determined schedule) to attempt to limit the environmental impacts upon the beach. This trial should be evaluated at the end of the season, perhaps through public consultation, to determine if beachgoers were satisfied with the quality of the beach, regardless of the limited grooming. Educational information about the limited grooming should be posted at the Grand Bend Beach prior to the start of the summer season to ensure that the public is aware of the trial and its intended results of enhancing the protection of the inland area. In addition to reducing the environmental impact upon the beach, minimizing the number of times the Grand Bend Beach is groomed over a summer season will also result in reduced operating costs.

Recommended Action

To better balance tourism and environmental protection of the beach, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores reduce the frequency of its grooming of the Grand Bend Beach for the upcoming 2011 summer season. It is recommended that the Municipality monitor the Main Beach and the North Beach and groom each as needed (as opposed to a pre-determined schedule) to attempt to limit the environmental impacts upon the beach.

Lake Water Levels

The level of water within lakes can fluctuate greatly depending upon weather conditions, time of year, as well as naturally occurring changes over time. This fluctuation can have an impact upon the sediment at the lake's bottom as "at times of high lake level, waves (the cause of shore erosion) are able to break closer to the shore, and when waves reach the shore there is erosion¹⁸." This erosion is greater on sandy beaches than on more rocky beaches, which generally have better seepage properties. The Greenhouse Effect, which is projected to cause rising global temperatures and overall rise of sea level, may result in a deepening of nearshore waters (including those in lakes), which may cause larger waves that will, in turn, lead to greater beach erosion¹⁹. Over time, it may be important for the Municipality of Lambton Shores to closely monitor the breadth of the beach from the water's edge to the inland municipal boundary, as it may be prudent to reduce the amount of dune grass plantings to open up more usable beach. The relationship between usable

¹⁸ Carter, C.H., Neal, W.J., Haras, W.S., Pilkey, Jr., O.H. (1987). Living with the Lake Erie shore. Duke University Press: Durham and London.

¹⁹ Bird, E.C.F. (1996). Beach management. Wiley & Sons, Inc.



beach and erosion prevention will have to be weighed carefully, and will be a long-term topic for consideration. For the time being, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores undertake a measurement exercise to determine the existing usable beach square footage, dune grass planting area square footage, and setback distances from the water's edge, such that these measurements may be compared annually to help the Municipality monitor the effects of erosion on the Grand Bend Beach. The distance from the water's edge to the setback measurement can impact future beach size and available beach lands for recreation activities. If the lake water level rises and the beach erodes further into the water, the usable beach space will be diminished over time. As recommended above, monitoring this space will allow the Municipality to maintain up-to-date data regarding one of its primary recreation assets.

Recommended Action

It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores undertake a measurement exercise to determine the existing usable beach square footage, dune grass planting area square footage, and setback distances from the water's edge, such that these measurements may be compared annually to help the Municipality monitor the effects of erosion on the Grand Bend Beach.

Partnerships

As previously mentioned, the County of Lambton's Community Health Unit is mandated to collect water quality data twice weekly, a task which utilizes the Swimming Water Information Monitor (S.W.I.M.). The S.W.I.M. was originally purchased through a partnership between the Municipality of Lambton Shores, the Grand Bend Rotary Club and the Grand Bend Community Foundation. This relationship is beneficial to the Municipality as it allows the collection of a range of water quality information (e.g., wave height, turbidity, bacteria levels, etc.); the future goal being to provide this data in real time via the Municipality's website and social media outlets (e.g., Twitter and Facebook), as well as at the beach itself. The Municipality currently maintains a successful partnership with the Grand Bend Rotary Club with respect to performing at least three water quality tests per week annually from July 1st through Labour Day weekend. If there is such a time when this partnership is no longer an option, the Municipality should seek an additional partnership to undertake this task. Should the Municipality be unable to secure a partner to perform these additional tests, the operating costs of approximately \$10,000 per annum will need to be incorporated into the Community Services Department budget. In addition, it is recommended that the Municipality continue to pursue the goal of providing real time water quality information online through its website, Twitter and Facebook, as well as at the Grand Bend Beach itself.

From 2001 through the summer of 2009, the Municipality had an outside company operating its beachfront canteen at the Beach House, but this operation reverted to municipal control for the summer of 2010. As previously mentioned, the revenue from this business can help offset the operating costs of the beach. The Municipality makes use of its own human resources for grooming, staffing the concession, maintenance and lifeguarding, rather than contracting these services out to external companies, allowing for cost savings. Should new opportunities or requests come forth, it is recommended that the Municipality consider these partnerships



through the use of a tool similar to the Standardized Partnered Service Provision Framework proposed within the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, albeit adjusted to account for the unique conditions of the beach (see model on the following page); suggested additions specifically for proposals related to the Grand Bend Beach are in bold). School boards in the area may provide a partnership opportunity with respect to mandatory student volunteer hours; these hours could be put towards beach cleaning, educational efforts, etc.

The Framework is not intended to be all encompassing or exhaustive but instead serves as an example for the Municipality to use and build upon when considering the merits versus challenges of requests brought forward by external parties. The specific requirements listed above for beach-related proposals are also to serve as a guide for specializing the Municipality's eventual partnership framework to ensure that beach-specific issues are addressed and agreed upon by all parties. As a point of departure, any project should be consistent with municipal objectives and philosophies; the remaining criteria will guide whether the Municipality would take an active, passive or no role at all in delivering the service with its potential partner.

The Municipality has, in the past, hosted a variety of events at the Grand Bend Beach, which have been managed by service organizations within Lambton Shores. Aquafest is organized by the Grand Bend Community Foundation's Environmental Committee, and serves to educate the public about environmental issues that affect water quality while celebrating the beachfront. The Grand Bend Optimist Club lends its support to a number of causes, including Burgerfest in the past. The Grand Bend Chamber of Commerce supports the Grand Bend Canada Day fireworks, Aquafest, Burgerfest, and other special events on the beach. It is recommended that the Municipality maintain its existing relationships with respect to Aquafest, Grand Bend Canada Day fireworks, and Burgerfest.

The Municipality of Lambton Shores has an existing relationship with the ABCA, largely with respect to planning and development. As previously discussed, the ABCA has jurisdiction over all construction within a horizontal setback area of the Grand Bend Beach. The ABCA has extensive experience and knowledge regarding beach management principles and environmental impacts of, and upon, coastal lands. Therefore, it is recommended that the Municipality conduct a meeting with the ABCA as an information gathering exercise and to broach the subject of partnership if both parties feel that this could be beneficial to each side.



Standardized Partnered Service Provision Framework (edited for potential beach partnerships)

Criteria	Decision	Response
Is the project or program consistent with the municipal mandate and service philosophy?	Yes No ▼ ►	Do not consider municipal involvement in the project.
Does the project or program respect the environmental vulnerability of the Grand Bend Beach?	Yes No ▼ ►	Do not consider municipal involvement in the project.
Is there a municipal role to play in providing the program or service?	Yes No ▼ ►	Do not consider municipal involvement in the project.
Is there demonstrated need for the proposed service or program?	Yes No ▼ ►	Do not consider municipal involvement in the project.
Does the proposed service or program conform to the municipality's strategic priorities and is it within long-term capital and/or operating budget forecasts?	Yes No ▼ ►	Either do not consider municipal involvement in the project or consider alternative forms of capital financing or ongoing funding sources.
Can specifications ensure that the community group will conform to the Department's vision, mandate, values, strategic priorities and service standards?	Yes No ▼ ►	Consider providing the service using a traditional municipal self managed approach (direct).
Can financial and liability risks be reasonably mitigated through an arrangement with the group?	Yes No ▼ ►	Consider providing the service using a traditional municipal self managed approach (direct).
Are there suitably qualified or properly equipped individuals within the group who are willing to provide the service or program and comply with legislation and policy requirements, including adhering to the principles put forth by the Blue Flag Programme?	Yes No ▼ ►	Consider providing the service using a traditional municipal self managed approach (direct).
Can the delivery responsibility of the service or program be assigned to an organization on a sole source basis?	Yes No ▼ ►	Issue a Request For Proposal or other procurement process specified by purchasing policies.
Is there consensus regarding the terms, conditions, standards of delivery and responsibilities of the community organization?	Yes No ▼ ►	Negotiate a mutually acceptable operating and performance standards with a community organization.
Establish a relationship with a community organization (standardized agreement) for the delivery of the program or service and adopt a mutually agreeable evaluation/monitoring system.		

Source: Municipality of Lambton Shores, Recreation and Leisure Services Plan (2011).



Recommended Actions

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to partner with the Grand Bend Rotary Club with respect to performing at least three water quality tests per week annually from July 1st through Labour Day weekend. If there is such a time when this partnership is no longer an option, the Municipality should seek an additional partnership to undertake this task. Should the Municipality be unable to secure a partner to perform these additional tests, the operating costs of approximately \$10,000 per annum will need to be incorporated into the Community Services Department budget.

It is recommended that the Municipality continue to pursue the goal of providing real time water quality information online through its website, Twitter and Facebook as well as at the Grand Bend Beach itself.

It is recommended that the Municipality maintain its existing relationships with respect to Aquafest, Grand Bend Canada Day fireworks, and Grand Bend Optimist Burgerfest; should new opportunities or requests come forth, it is recommended that the Municipality consider these partnerships through the use of a tool similar to the Standardized Partnered Service Provision Framework proposed within the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, albeit adjusted to account for the unique conditions of the beach.

It is recommended that the Municipality conduct a meeting with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority as an information gathering exercise and to broach the subject of partnership if both parties feel that this could be beneficial to each side.



Implications of Recommended Actions

The following table provides direction regarding potential operating, capital and additional staffing implications of the recommended actions contained within this Research and Consultation Initiative. Recommended actions that do not have significant cost or staffing implications or are currently part of existing staff duties are marked as 'N/A' though Municipal Staff will evaluate any resource implications of such actions in greater detail at the time of implementation. The recommended actions are listed in the table within the categories found in the Executive Summary of this Report, which are based upon the Terms of Reference provided by the Municipality of Lambton Shores.

BEACH USES	IMPLICATIONS
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores focus use of the beach as a venue for unscheduled, spontaneous active and passive recreation opportunities.	N/A
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores be open to input from the general public with respect to major decisions regarding the Grand Bend Beach.	Staff time to develop feedback tools and analyze; printing costs
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores strive to satisfy the items on the checklist of components of a world class lakefront beach (including items such as placing limits on residential waterfront development, promoting access to the waterfront by means other than private vehicles, maintaining community vision through good management, honouring local identity, history and culture, etc.) to the greatest degree possible.	Costs to be determined based upon action(s) undertaken by the Municipality
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to strive to maintain Blue Flag Status at the Grand Bend Beach, as well as at Grand Bend Harbour and Port Franks Marina.	Staff time to monitor Blue Flag requirements; potential capital resource implications over and above current expenditures, particularly if Blue Flag criteria and/or operational practices to attain them evolve over time
To ensure continued accuracy of water quality readings, it is recommended that the Municipality continue its use of the Lambton Shores Swimming Water Information Monitor (S.W.I.M.).	If no new partner is found, operating costs of approximately \$10,000 per annum and staff time to undertake water testing may be incurred
It is recommended that the Municipality adopt the following definition of prime time with respect to the Grand Bend Beach: dawn to dusk daily from Father's Day weekend through Labour Day weekend, as well as weekends from Victoria Day through Father's Day, inclusive.	Costs incurred by the Municipality to be determined for any event through business planning, including consideration of benefit to the community (e.g., economic development)



It is recommended that the Municipality develop a policy that will prohibit events on long weekends (Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday and Labour Day), but will allow up to two commercial events (maximum of 3 days per event) on the Main Beach during the prime summer season, provided the ecological health of the beach is respected, the event not take up a portion of the beach considered to be detrimental to non-event usage (as deemed by the Municipality), and the event be affiliated with a Lambton Shores community group and/or business.	Staff time for policy development
It is recommended that activities, events and other commercial ventures that take place in Grand Bend, but off-beach, should be supported by the Municipality, in part for their potential to draw visitors to the beach area.	Potential rental revenues and/or operational resources to maintain Beach House for proposed use
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to track the daily interactions at each parking meter within the municipal parking lots and on Main Street in Grand Bend to monitor beach visits. This will allow the Municipality to compare trends in visits from summer to summer, as well as on long weekends versus regular weekends, etc. to determine needs for additional amenities, maintenance efforts, etc.	Staff time to track parking data and monitor trends
It is recommended that the Municipality continue to support the provision of active living programs on the observation deck of the Beach House (preferably during non-prime hours).	N/A

INFRASTRUCTURE	IMPLICATIONS
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue to monitor the general condition of the Beach House, identifying life cycle maintenance and improvement requirements, including projected costs to be incorporated into the municipal budget for the year(s) of completion.	Staff time to monitor building condition; capital costs to be determined through business planning if and when improvements are required
It is recommended that the Municipality ensure it continues to fulfill the following Lifesaving Society safety requirements at the Grand Bend Beach by providing: a dedicated emergency phone with posted emergence numbers; rescue aid for each lifeguard; at least 2 buoyant throwing assists with buoyant lines; at least 2 reaching poles; at least one spineboard with effective immobilization system; at least one Number 2 first aid kit; a designated first aid area; and rescue craft if the swimming area extends more than 50 metres from shore.	Ongoing operating costs already being incurred by the Municipality



It is recommended that the playground at the Grand Bend Beach continue to be included among the inventory of municipal playgrounds that are part of this assessment program and upgrades and repairs should be undertaken as deemed necessary by inspections.	Costs to be determined through business planning if and when improvements are required
With respect to the splash pad, it is recommended that the Municipality should continue to undertake regular inspections to ensure the concrete is free from chipping and cracks and water features are in good working order; any issues should be addressed as soon as possible.	Costs to be determined through business planning if and when improvements are required
It is recommended that the Municipality continue to maintain paid parking lots on the beach side of Highway 21 to provide ongoing revenue to offset beach operating costs; it is also recommended that the Municipality continue to offer discounted seasonal parking passes to local property owners.	Ongoing operating costs already being incurred by the Municipality
While parking at the beachfront is currently limited to existing space, it is recommended that the Municipality consider acquiring further lands to be used for parking, whether through lease or purchase should the opportunity arise; should this parking area be further than one kilometre from the beach, the Municipality should investigate the provision of a shuttle service.	Costs to be determined through business planning if lease or purchase of additional parking lands is deemed to be necessary
It is recommended that the Municipality continue to implement and follow the guidance provided within the Harbour Sustainability Plan at Grand Bend Harbour (examples include using green cleaning supplies and bathroom products, installing high efficiency lighting, and loaning bicycles to boaters while they are docked).	Ongoing operating costs; potential for additional operating costs to implement new initiatives from the Harbour Sustainability Plan
To facilitate casual participation in sand volleyball, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores install four sets of beach volleyball net posts on the Grand Bend Beach; potential locations will need to be assessed.	Capital costs to be determined through business planning
It is recommended that the Municipality consider Klondyke Park as a possible location for sand volleyball courts (minimum of four courts) that may be used for casual play or organized use.	Potential for capital cost implications should the Municipality choose to construct sand volleyball courts at this location
It is recommended that the Municipality follow the proposed signage planning process across the Municipality and all of its communities (stages include clarification of goals, surveying existing signage conditions, understanding signage needs, identifying unique historical and cultural aspects), including revisiting discussions from previous signage consultation efforts.	Staff time to create and conduct consultation and survey of existing conditions; capital costs to be determined through business planning



It is recommended that the Municipality identify a list of potential sites that have relevance to the history of Grand Bend, research the facts of each, and select for plaquing/signing those that are the most significant.	Staff time to identify relevant historical sites
It is recommended that the Municipality ensure that signage is erected to provide directions to the three sections of the Grand Bend Beach (North, South and Main), to identify the location of the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building that serve the South Beach, as well as municipal parking lots and beach access points to make mobility through the community easier for visitors and residents.	Capital costs to be determined through business planning / consideration of current municipal signage creation and installation costs
It is recommended that if, in the future, the Community Services Department is repaving streets near the beach, the addition of sidewalks should be considered if feasible in terms of space and financial requirements.	Potential for capital cost implications should the Municipality choose to pursue the additional of sidewalks
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores refurbish the washrooms at the Grand Bend Harbour building should the need arise as a result of increased patronage to the South Beach.	Capital costs to be determined through business planning
It is recommended that the Municipality consider the feasibility of expanding the boardwalk to the North Beach area to allow emergency vehicle access and remove the physical access barrier to the North Beach.	Staff time to determine feasibility; costs of construction to be determined through feasibility study
RENTAL RATES	IMPLICATIONS
It is recommended that the Municipality revisit the beach rental rates following the 2012 summer season, taking into account the frequency and type of rentals that occur over the next two years.	Staff time to assess beach rental rates



PARTNERSHIPS	IMPLICATIONS
It is recommended that the Municipality continue to partner with the Grand Bend Rotary Club with respect to performing at least three water quality tests per week annually from July 1 st through Labour Day weekend. If there is such a time when this partnership is no longer an option, the Municipality should seek an additional partnership to undertake this task. Should the Municipality be unable to secure a partner to perform these additional tests, the operating costs of approximately \$10,000 per annum will need to be incorporated into the Community Services Department budget.	Operating costs of approximately \$10,000 per annum to support the three additional water tests per week during the summer season should a new partner not be secured
It is recommended that the Municipality continue to pursue the goal of providing real time water quality information online through its website, Twitter and Facebook, as well as at the Grand Bend Beach itself.	Staff time to update the Municipality's social media tools
It is recommended that the Municipality maintain its existing relationships with respect to Aquafest, Grand Bend Canada Day fireworks, and Grand Bend Optimist Burgerfest; should new opportunities or requests come forth, it is recommended that the Municipality consider these partnerships through the use of a tool similar to the Standardized Partnered Service Provision Framework proposed within the Municipality's 2011 Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, albeit adjusted to account for the unique conditions of the beach.	Staff time to evaluate partnerships
It is recommended that the Municipality conduct a meeting with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority as an information gathering exercise and to broach the subject of partnership if both parties feel that this could be beneficial to each side.	Staff time to plan and attend meeting

ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL	IMPLICATIONS
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores continue with the process of dune restoration and dune grass plantings to reduce unnecessary erosion and beach loss, while ensuring that ample beach space is left for recreational purposes.	Ongoing operating costs to plant and maintain dune grasses
It is recommended that the Municipality install educational signage near the dune grass planting areas to inform the general public about the importance of dune grass to the health of the dunes.	Capital costs to be determined through business planning



It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores remove the snow fencing that currently surrounds the Main Beach dune grass planting areas at such a time as the plantings have sufficiently taken root (to be re-evaluated by the Municipality prior to each summer season).	Staff time for evaluation and removal of fencing
It is recommended that the Municipality replace permanent flower bed snow fences (near Beach House) with decorative fencing and add them to its maintenance roster for the long-term.	Staff time for replacement and maintenance of fencing; cost of fencing to be determined by competitive pricing exercise to be undertaken by the Municipality
To better balance tourism and environmental protection of the beach, it is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores reduce the frequency of its grooming of the Grand Bend Beach (in 2010, the beach groomer was used daily between Father's Day and Labour Day on the Main Beach and every other day on the North Beach) for the upcoming 2011 summer season. It is recommended that the Municipality monitor the Main Beach and the North Beach and groom each as needed (as opposed to a predetermined schedule) to attempt to limit the environmental impacts upon the beach.	Operational savings associated with a reduction in the frequency of grooming activities
It is recommended that the Municipality of Lambton Shores undertake a measurement exercise to determine the existing usable beach square footage, dune grass planting area square footage, and setback distances from the water's edge, such that these measurements may be compared annually to help the Municipality monitor the effects of erosion on the Grand Bend Beach.	Staff time and/or consulting fees to be determined based on scale and frequency of measurement exercises