



Burks Falls, Armour, Ryerson, 2014



SOUTH ALMAGUIN HIGHLANDS
“AFFORDABLE BEAUTY”
ASSET INVENTORY, GAP ANALYSIS AND MARKET STUDY

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1. BACKGROUND

John Finley Consulting, in partnership with ASM Advanced Strategic Management Consultants, is pleased to present this final report for the South Almaguin Economic Development Committee's consideration. It contains an ASSET INVENTORY, GAP ANALYSIS and a MARKET STUDY.

The final report will provide the South Almaguin Economic Development Committee partners with the strategies necessary to update the current 2013 Economic Development Plan.

Based on SAHEDC's Core Values, this report and its recommendations point the way to:

1. *Create and sustain economic growth within our community.*
2. *Ensure the social prosperity of our residents and stakeholders through preserving and celebrating our artistic and historic culture, our safety and our quality of life*
3. *Establish a long range focus for conserving our region's points and properties of interest.*
4. *Build strong relationships with all stakeholders, residents and neighboring municipalities and nurture them through strong, effective communication.*
5. *Provide strong leadership and governance within the region.*

We have collected and analyzed data from a variety of sources to compile an asset inventory. We have interviewed key figures in local government and business and surveyed relevant plans and reports to get a wide range of public opinion and perspective on issues and priorities. This has enabled us to produce our gap analysis and identify the key findings and issues that we recommend as priorities in updating the Strategic Economic Development Plan.

1.1 Area History

The South Almaguin area was first settled in the 1870's and 1880's by settlers primarily from southern Ontario and the British Isles, under the Free Land Grant Act of 1868. The townships of Armour and Ryerson were first surveyed for settlement in 1871 by a Mr. Clementi and by 1879 the little village of Burk's Falls had been established at the falls below the confluence of the north and south branches of the Magnetawan River.



David Francis Burk of Oshawa beached his canoe at the foot of the falls on the beautiful Magnetawan River in the autumn of 1875. He chose his land under the Free Land Grant Act. Mr. Burk and Mr. Knight, who had arrived about the same time, made what might have been the first political decision in the village, they flipped a coin, and the settlement became known as Burk's Falls. The Village of Burk's Falls was eventually incorporated in 1890. In the 1879 Guide Book and Atlas of Muskoka and Parry Sound Districts, the author notes that Burk's Falls "seems destined to develop into a thriving village". In the decades following, the people of Armour, Ryerson and Burk's Falls built homes, farms, roads, bridges, churches, and small businesses to serve the needs of settlers and a growing seasonal influx of tourists. Small settlements like Starrat, Midlothian, Katrine, and Chetwynd grew up, opened post offices and built schools to serve their growing population.

The establishment of steam navigation from Burk's Falls through Lake Cecebe to Magnetawan and on to Ahmic Lake and the arrival of the railway in 1885 speeded settlement and the flow of goods to enable it and the tourism that followed. The area thrived and population increased slowly but steadily, despite the deadly flu epidemic of 1919 and two world wars, which took the lives of many of its sons and daughters.



Agriculture, forestry, lumber mills, steam navigation as well as a few manufacturers were the traditional mainstays of the economy. As more and better roads were constructed, increasing numbers of tourists visited the area every summer, some buying property and building cottages and camps. School buses spelt the end of the one-room schoolhouse and many smaller settlements disappeared.

Since the days of Tom Thompson and the Group of Seven, our area, sitting on the doorstep of Algonquin Park, has been home to artists and artisans, outdoor adventurers and innovative and visionary entrepreneurs inspired by the beauty of their natural surroundings. Today a large percentage of the population of South Almaguin is employed in trucking, manufacturing, construction and tourism but recent improvements in highway transportation and in high speed communication have provided residents of Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson with new opportunities and challenges. This study will begin to address many of these challenges and focus on the means to maximize our great natural advantages and our human potential.

The South Almaguin Highlands Economic Development Committee was formed to address these challenges and opportunities for Burk's Falls, Ryerson and Armour. In June of 2013 an Economic Development Plan was finalized and this study has been commissioned as a first step. The study will provide an asset inventory, market study, and gap analysis which will form the basis for recommendations to update the Strategic Economic Development Plan. In the past many worthwhile and valuable studies have been commissioned by the three councils but without a body to act on their recommendations, implement them, and provide long-term follow up and political support, they have largely been ignored.

We congratulate the councils of Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson on having established South Almaguin Highlands Economic Development Committee and for hiring Dave Gray as Community Development Officer to provide continuity to your economic development efforts. The start-up funding for this initiative have been generously provided through a program administered by the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

1.2 Methodology Used in this Study

Meeting with Decision Makers

An important part of the work has been sitting down and talking with key decision-makers in the community. John Finley, President of John Finley Consulting, together with Dave Gray, have conducted interviews with political and community leaders who are in a position to make change happen. Their general views and priorities, together with areas of consensus are detailed in Section 3.1 of the Environmental Scan.

Research Best Practices

We have conducted research into success strategies and best practices from a number of municipalities and relevant jurisdictions in Ontario and other provinces. Our intention was to discover what has worked well in the context of what could work well in South Almaguin Highlands. While many “successes” are chronicled in municipal and provincial publications, as well as in popular media, they are frequently based on financial, environmental and business factors that are not common to our area. We have, therefore, sorted the wheat from the chaff and have provided some models that could well serve as examples for our area. These results are discussed in **Section 3.2**.

We have created a catalogue of current investment information. This includes a survey of all community assets in **Section 4** as well as a directory of businesses in the Burks Fall, Armour and Ryerson area in Appendix A. Available commercial real estate and idled structures are also included in Appendix A.

As a result of this survey of assets, we have identified those gaps in assets and services which require action to provide the lifestyle and business conditions which potential residents and investors are looking for, and which are key factors in site selection.

In Section 6 the Market Study focuses on those areas identified in the gap analysis that need the most urgent action in order to maintain a healthy population growth and retain and attract businesses and tourism. It also identifies the best two key sectors that the region should concentrate on to develop and attract investment.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Key Assets and Challenges

Assets

- 1. Natural surroundings.** The South Almaguin Highlands, bordering on the world-famous Algonquin Park, is an area of numerous lakes, rivers, and forests in the Georgian Bay watershed. Our climate offers warm and sunny summers and cold crisp winters. The maple tree defines both spring and fall, providing maple sap for syrup-production in the spring and offering the most spectacular fall colours. From Algonquin Park the Magnetawan River winds its way through South Almaguin passing Pickerel, Jack, Doe, Three Mile, Cecebe and a host of smaller lakes and streams to the shores of Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. It is no wonder that the beauty of our landscape was captured on canvas by the Group of Seven and Tom Thompson: large outcroppings of rocky pre-Cambrian granite offset by blue lakes and majestic pines. We are also blessed with provincially significant wetland areas, which play host annually to millions of birds passing through or staying for the summer and also with good agricultural land for mixed farming. For the outdoor adventure seeker, the area offers unlimited possibilities for rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, kayaking and canoeing, watersports, and fishing in the summer and fall, whitewater rafting in the spring, and a full range of winter sports from skiing or snowmobiling to dog-sledding and ice-fishing. For the less adventurous, picnicking, paddling, bird watching and the annual magnificent display of fall colours are all part of the quieter activities we have on offer to residents and visitors. There are many quiet public beaches and access points to the water for visitors and residents for day trips, as well as cottages and campgrounds for longer stays.
- 2. Transportation routes and distance to major markets.** South Almaguin's location on the major north-south provincial highway, just south of the Trans-Canada highway, makes it easy to find and access from all points on the continent. Secondary highways 520 and 124 provide a scenic route to Parry Sound on Georgian Bay. We are located within a three-hour drive (257 km) of our major market, the GTA, which accounts for over 80% of all visitors to the area.
- 3. Local Human Services.** South Almaguin also has excellent employment, social services and medical resources, with a doctor-patient ratio better than the provincial average. Police, fire and ambulance all have 911 service and are all located in Burk's Falls.
- 4. Infrastructure.** Burk's Falls is the only village between Huntsville and Powassan to have a full water and sewer system. While ongoing maintenance and updating are a challenge, it is a huge plus to be able to offer these services to potential investors. The fact that the system is completely financed by user fees puts the municipalities involved in a better position to debenture needed updates and repairs.

Internet and cell phone infrastructure are excellent in all of Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson, making it possible for rural farms and businesses to connect with the world and each other.

5. **Taxation.** This area enjoys a low realty tax as outlined in section 4.11. There are no business tax or development charges and parking is free and abundant.

Challenges (Opportunities)

1. **Tourism:** There is an opportunity for a private sector investment in accommodation in the Village. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a need for a small inn or hotel within the urban area. The addition of a hotel would be a major step in supporting and expanding the tourism sector as well as meeting the present needs of the manufacturing sector in the region. There is an opportunity for the municipalities to support local tourism businesses by developing managed public trails for non-motorized activities. Biking, hiking and cross-country ski trails are in demand. Look at the success of Arrowhead Park's winter activities program. The increasingly large number of retirees with active lifestyles will be requiring amenities like this to attract them to the area. The development of active lifestyle opportunities will attract private investment in outdoor recreation outfitting, additional retail spending and increased municipal tax revenue.

An excellent study for a heritage development plan of the Magnetawan River was commissioned in 1999 by the Village of Burk's Falls and the townships of Armour, Ryerson and Magnetawan. The recommendations of this study should be reviewed as they are just as valid today, if not more so. The opportunities for trails development, heritage signage, a historical map of the waterway and lakes and many more creative initiatives are just waiting to be developed.

2. **Community Improvement Plan** needed for Ontario Street retail area. Many retail venues are empty, looking shabby and run down as noted in the first impressions report.
3. **Signage** Local attractions, retail areas, the information centre, all need imaginative signage. Creative signage leading to the downtown area from all provincial highway entrances. A creative sign at Commercial Drive and highway 520 to encourage a visit to the Village centre and the falls.
4. **Retention of major employers:** To maintain good communications with local businesses and grow the tax base many municipalities have implemented successful strategies to keep the lines of communication open and encourage investment and new jobs. The Business Retention and Expansion Program should be considered as part of a Community Improvement Project.
5. **Demographics:** As we will see in section 4, the population is aging and some creative strategies need to be considered to attract young families. This will tie in with the challenge of attracting more retail businesses, skilled trades and other young entrepreneurs. It should also be noted that the immigrant population in

South Almaguin is almost non-existent and that the last wave of foreign immigrants to the area was just after WW2. A strategy to attract young immigrant families, especially those with skilled trades, or rural/agricultural experience, should be considered.

2.2 Summary of Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made after gathering and examining the community assets identified within the framework of this study as outlined in the request for proposals issued in December of 2013.

General

1. Update the Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships strategic plan to include the recommendations contained within this final plan.
2. Set short and long-term goals for infrastructure, tourism, and business retention programs as clarified by the gap analysis.
3. Make the Community Development Officer the gateway for seeking out all funding opportunities, grant applications. The Community Development Officer should be the funding go-to person for all three municipalities.
4. Long-term: Investigate municipal governance options to ensure the long-term goals of the area can be achieved.

Specific

1. **Update and maintain the infrastructure.** It is recommended that Burks Falls Armour and Ryerson compile a joint list of all infrastructure needs (roads, bridges, water and sewer, landfill etc.).

The municipal water and sewer services located in Burks Falls are operated on a user pay system. These services are paid by users and are not included in the municipal tax rate.

As the only area between Huntsville and Powassan to offer both water and sewer services the potential for business investment in the area is excellent. Plans are in place to maintain and update the system. Funding is always a challenge for small communities and all options for senior levels of government assistance are being researched and applied for by municipal staff and elected officials.

2. **Downtown revitalization, supported by a Community Improvement Program** is a major component of economic and tourism development. Prior to forming a plan, it is recommended that fire and building inspection of all retail premises be carried out to identify any fire, safety, and building standards issues that may need to be recognized as part of a Community Improvement Program. The program should include a façade improvement study with style and colours

of exteriors and signage. The CDO should seek out funding opportunities for Community Improvement Program and advise as to what initiatives may qualify for funding in order that goals and priorities can be set accordingly. Encourage entrepreneurs to open businesses on Ontario Street. Seek creative solutions for empty storefronts. Open air concerts in the park should be continued and further promotional opportunities considered to boost atmosphere.

3. **Develop tourism marketing partnerships** with neighbouring municipalities. Consider adopting and promoting the “**Villages of Almaguin**” concept outlined in the 2009 CAEDA Strategic Plan. With expansion of the concept to include the SAHEDC area, a marketing plan could be created with appropriate maps and brochures to encourage visitation from the GTA. Funding is presently not available to penetrate this major market without area partnerships.

15 % of all visitors to this region site visiting small Towns and Villages as the main reason to visit. Funding could be available through Explorers Edge for this regional initiative.

4. **Heritage:** The number of villages in Canada is the lowest in the G8. In Europe, many small villages have survived because they have been successful in maintaining their unique identity, heritage buildings and landscapes while revitalizing their small businesses and traditional retail areas.



Callander Scotland

In Ontario, Huntsville, North Bay, Elmira, Cambridge, St. Jacobs and many other small rural towns and villages have done the same. The establishment of a shared municipal heritage committee under the terms of the Ontario Heritage Act would be a starting point. Continued support of local heritage and culture groups as well as heritage preservation could be part of its mandate. A municipal heritage register with an online registry of listed buildings, similar to those of other communities could be compiled by volunteers. Heritage plaques on listed local buildings and heritage landscapes would be a great addition to the village and townships. This would open the door to greater funding opportunities from both levels of government and perhaps a one day heritage event as part of Doors Open Ontario could be established. This would support the hard work of The Burks Falls and Area Historical Society.

5. **Directional signage is needed** at all entrances and at Commercial Drive encouraging additional traffic to the centre of the village and the falls.



Courtesy of the Town of Bracebridge

Updated and eye catching signage should be considered for all municipal offices. Replacement of the present community billboard with a multi-functional design providing information on local events and maps, of the downtown and one of Armour and Ryerson showing the location of all local attractions including parks, trails, beaches, public washrooms, municipal offices, and the information centre.

6. **Websites** of all three municipalities should be updated and some shared webpages designed for economic development, parks and recreation, tourism, communication and agriculture. The SAHEDC pages will provide a gateway for potential investors to easily access an up to date and attractive community profile. The site should provide all relevant investment information from available real estate to tax rates in all three municipalities. The site should provide links to all federal and provincial resources for small business and industry, site selectors, employers and job seekers, and anyone considering relocating to Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships. The information provided in this report will need updating from time to time. Responsibility for these pages and for the entire website should be the responsibility of the CDO to make sure that it is presenting the best foot forward at all times. Shared tourism and recreation parts of the websites should provide online maps for all sorts of things: location of playgrounds, beaches, boat launches, marinas, walking, hiking, XC and snowmobile trails, restaurants and accommodation,

retail locations, farm gate sellers, etc. The Chamber of Commerce could be an excellent partner in maintaining the business list and promoting events

7. **Continuing support for Chamber of Commerce** activities and initiatives. The Burks Falls Chamber of Commerce could, with some municipal support, host some hospitality training for retail trades, employers and employees to address perceived attitude issues identified in First Impressions exercise. A welcoming atmosphere created through the front line employee often sets the tone of the visit and encourages return visits. Continue to encourage the hard working and dedicated community volunteer groups.

Holding an annual Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson appreciation dinner/BBQ for all volunteers in the community is a simple and inexpensive way to encourage continued participation.

8. **Create great active lifestyle amenities.** The fastest growing sector of the population is retirees. Good services and lifestyle amenities are required to attract them to locate here. Young active families also want these same amenities. This does not have to cost a lot. Expand municipally managed trails for walking, hiking, biking and cross-country skiing. Examine possibilities to establish an outdoor recreation area / wetlands park on the Magnetawan River that would incorporate managed trails, wetlands viewing areas for birdwatchers and boat access to the river for canoe's and kayakers on municipally or provincially owned wetlands. Consult with MOE and MNR- Wye Valley Heritage and Point Pelée for best practices. 12% of visitors to the area have identified bird watching as the main reason for their visit. Encourage providers of unique experiences – whitewater rafting, rock-climbing, zip lining, bird watching and canoeing, to make Burk's Falls their base. Promote waterfront access. Creative municipal signage could be considered at all local beaches, playgrounds, trails and boat launches.
9. **Youth out migration and a graying population** mix are a major challenge. Skilled trades are in short supply. Strategies to encourage youth to stay in area or move here, start businesses here, and fill critical skills gaps that are developing due to an aging workforce, must be an essential part of any economic development plan. There are programs through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and other government agencies to provide guidance and resources for youth employment.
10. **Long term care:** There is a tidal wave of aging baby boomers on the horizon, many of whom will need care. Consult with local health and social planners. What will we need in 10 years, 20 years? There is a shortage of long-term care facility between Huntsville and South River. A site for a long-term care home, assisted living units or geared to income senior units may become available in the long term and the three municipalities are encouraged to have a plan in place for that eventuality.
11. **Agriculture :** Statistics Canada has just announced that the number of farmers in Canada is shrinking, and that farmers are aging. Demand for locally grown

and organic produce, meat, poultry and eggs as well as maple syrup and honey, and organic animal feed is growing. The weekly farmers market always needs more local produce. OMAFRA has made recent recommendations to Ontario hospitals and care facilities encouraging them to search out locally produced food. This would certainly provide another local market.

OMAFRA statistics for Parry Sound District indicate that total farm cash receipts in 2012 were \$6.4 million. Maple products accounted for \$1.1 million of that total and was the top commodity, followed by cattle & calves at \$800,000 in cash receipts, with nursery, sod & floriculture third at \$600,000. These figures indicate there is potential to increase total farm receipts through the development of new markets for agricultural products and through the development of new products and services for niche and specialty markets.

Local farmers need support and new farming initiatives need to be encouraged. With help and guidance from OMAFRA, additional funding may be available to the local agricultural society to restructure. Local support for farmers is key. Help to expand markets for agricultural produce and value-added products, such as maple products, honey, jams, jellies, pickles and relishes is all available. An aggressive marketing campaign to recruit more farmers to the area, including new Canadians with farming skills should be considered.



In Armour and Ryerson numerous opportunities exist to purchase 100 acre lots or existing farms for very reasonable prices ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000. Young farmers from Britain and the EU, northern and central Europe who are all facing prohibitive prices for farms and a decreasing supply of available land, could be tapped as a source of young, skilled agricultural entrepreneurs.

- 12. Transportation** Plans are being considered to return the para-bus service that was of great assistance to many local seniors. A regional transportation needs assessment could be considered prior to approaching sources of funding. Future plans could include including using the bus for transportation to local beaches in the summertime twice daily for residents as an option to personal transportation. Examine the feasibility of regional commuter bus to North Bay /Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson for students. Consideration should be given

to expanded use of the Car Pool Almaguin service coordinated by the Women's Only Resource Centre in South River.

13. **Sidewalks** connecting Ontario St. to Commercial Drive and on Commercial Dr. in Armour Township need to be a priority.
14. The Burk's Falls Armour & Ryerson Union Public Library is currently undergoing a strategic planning process. We advise that the key recommendations of this process be included in the Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships Strategic Plan Economic Development Plan.
15. **Cinema.** To support local business and provide the local youth with additional things to do, implement a trial to operate from May 24 to Thanksgiving, Christmas and March break. With careful planning this could attract additional visitation. Tourists and cottagers are always looking for rainy day activities.
16. **Retail shopping:** Opportunities exist for local niche markets that will complement existing successful retailers (Circling Hawks, The Flower Garden, The Wooden Roo, Yettis Pizza, The Pub, Original Heat, The Cutters Edge, Dee's Bistro, The Garden Market, Northern Notes Music and several others). The existing supermarket is slated for a much needed update, and could offer a wider product selection that modern shoppers, especially young people, tourists, cottagers, and retirees want. This segment will buy locally instead of travelling to Huntsville

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



3.1 What the Decision-Makers are saying

Interview Summaries

By means of a series of interviews with community leaders and decision makers in Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson, we have found that many issues and perceptions are common to all three municipalities. What follows is a summary of the issues that were raised.

On Infrastructure, Roads, Water and Sewers

- Quality and quantity of drinking water was a concern in all interviews. The concern is the long term availability of a potable water source not the quality of the municipal system operated by the Village of Burks Falls.
- Water and sewer infrastructure needs replacement/expansion/updating
- The landfill site is near capacity
- Downtown (Ontario St.) needs a Community Improvement Plan, and a reason to visit (lure signs at Commercial Drive leading towards the downtown)
- The bridge on Ontario St. was given to the municipality with no financial consideration for the provision of long term maintenance. Present costs to maintain, approximately \$2 million.
- The single lane bridge at Yonge St. requires approximately \$500,000 in repairs.
- The tri- community services relationship is in need of review.

On Taxes, tax rates and taxation in general

- Taxpayers think taxes are too high. Note: while this comment was expressed a number of times, no context as to why the concern was expressed was given.
- Approximately 40 to 55% of all taxpayers in Armour and Ryerson are seasonal, Burk's Falls has significantly less.
- Seasonal residents are active in voicing their positions on taxes and other municipal issues.
- Lake Associations, such as The Three Mile Lake and Pickerel Lake Association are active.
- No business tax.

- No development fees.
- High number of fixed income families.

On Environmental Issues

- The proximity to the Magnetawan River of the landfill site is an issue.
- Future green power projects are encouraging. Initial environmental issues are being mitigated.
- There are environmental issues/opportunities for the existing landfill to accept manufacturing waste products at the present site. This requires further discussion with the local manufacturing sector.

On Heritage and Culture

- There is support in the community, and on Council for the Burk's Falls and area Historical Association. This volunteer based group is reviewing future plans for possible heritage site locations.

On Funding and Investment Opportunities

- It is recommended that the CDO be the point person for all municipally approved programs. The CDO should work closely with senior staff in all 3 municipalities to insure that opportunities are identified

Future Concerns and Directions



- Creative approaches to meet increased demands for services and meet the need for additional revenues to provide services.
- Further shared services should be explored
- Transportation is a concern (local and regional)
- Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson have all developed a long term replacement/upgrade plan for infrastructure and funding has been applied for
- The water and sewer services are important to support future growth
- Water conservation plans are being addressed through metering and summer usage restrictions to offset capital costs and extend the life of the present system
- All partners should identify and through zoning, protect untapped aquifers. This will help provide a water supply for long term growth.
- Health care for those outside the 30-minute window is a concern.
- Senior care now and in the future is a concern. There is an opportunity for senior care and services.
- Waterfront improvements are needed as part of an overall Community Improvement Plan.
- The village needs more residential building lots to attract families.
- A merger of municipalities should be considered to meet future challenges and encourage controlled growth.

3.2 Best Practices for South Almaguin Highlands

A discussion of what has worked well in other communities of similar size and demography.

3.2.1. Ontario Communities

To the south Huntsville is an excellent example. With careful planning and process, with partnerships, and with political support, waterfront redevelopment and downtown revitalization breathed life back into a town where well over 2,000 manufacturing jobs had been lost and the Big Box stores had been introduced on the outskirts of the traditional downtown shopping area. The downtown businesses and the local elected officials recognized the need for action and developed a community economic development plan. ***Not only did the leaders develop the plan but took full responsibility in the implementation of the plan.***

Now, the downtown core has been restored, retail activity is high, tourism is flourishing and many new employment and educational opportunities have expanded. There are several components to planning and implementation of any strategic economic development plan but the most important component is to have the absolute support of the locally elected community leaders and the community. ***There is a direct relationship to the health of a downtown core and the future success of the community.***

Waterfront redevelopment has been at the heart of success of many northern Ontario Communities. The Almaguin region next to the “World Famous” Algonquin Provincial Park is fortunate to have the small town atmosphere and natural beauty that will play a major role in the area’s future.

Huron Business Development Corporation

In Huron County, the Huron Business Development Corporation commissioned a study on best practices which concluded:

Therefore, best practices for attracting outside development would seem to be to make the community attractive and receptive to appropriate new industry by focusing on the key ingredients to success and by capacity building

Appendix E to this report on small farm viability focuses on issues common to small farmers all over Ontario and its recommendations would apply equally to South Almaguin.

http://www.smallbusinesshuron.ca/publications/edri/best_practices_report_final.PDF

3.2.2. Other Provinces and Jurisdictions

RURAL RENAISSANCE : BC’S SMALL TOWN ECONOMY. Halseth, Greg.

“Rural and small-town B.C. have the types of assets now so in demand by workers and industry. Many of these assets, such as a sense of community, a high quality of life, affordable housing and a safe place to raise a family or to grow old, have long defined

our rural and small-town places. Place-based development will also benefit from our well-educated workforce, our younger demographic relative to other OECD countries, the presence of support services and industries, and affordable commercial and industrial lands.”

<http://www.bcbusiness.ca/careers/rural-renaissance-bcs-small-town-economy>

**SMALL TOWNS, BIG IDEAS,
CASE STUDIES IN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

Will Lambe, Director, Community & Economic Development Program, UNC School of Government

Seven Themes

1. In small towns, community development is economic development.
2. Small towns with the most dramatic outcomes tend to have leaders who are proactive and future oriented; they embrace change, and assume risk.
3. Successful community economic development strategies are guided by a broadly held local vision.
4. Defining assets and opportunities broadly can yield innovative strategies that capitalize on a community's competitive advantage.
5. Innovative local governance, partnerships, and organizations can significantly enhance a community's capacity for community economic development.
6. Effective communities identify, measure, and celebrate short- term successes in order to sustain support for long term strategies.
7. Viable community economic development involves the use of a comprehensive package of strategies and tools, rather than a piecemeal approach.

http://www.iira.org/conference/Presentations/Small_Towns_Big_Ideas_Lambe.pdf

STRATEGIES FOR SMALL TOWN SUCCESS.

Joe A. Sumners, Ph.D., Economic and Community Development Institute,
Auburn University and Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Promoting economic prosperity and improved quality of life for communities throughout Alabama

“Leaders in struggling rural communities and small towns often pin their hopes for economic prosperity on the recruitment of a large manufacturing plant to “save” their town. In Alabama, our success in attracting large automotive plants like Mercedes-Benz, Honda, and Hyundai has fueled such a lust for industrial recruitment. Many small towns are sure that their big break is just around the corner, if only they can come up with the right financial incentives and recruitment strategy.

An unfortunate consequence of relying on strategies that focus exclusively on industrial recruitment is that many communities undervalue, or don’t understand, the importance of

other determinants of a strong local economy. Business retention and expansion, small business and entrepreneurial development, tourism and retiree attraction, for example, receive short shrift compared to industrial recruitment. More significantly, local leaders pay too little attention to building community and civic infrastructure. Put another way, many small towns overemphasize marketing and sales (industrial recruiting) without adequate attention to product development (improving the quality of life in the community). But prosperous small town economies are built upon the foundation of strong communities.”

<http://ecdi.wordpress.com/2009/11/29/strategies-for-small-town-success/>

“... a community with a strong **civic infrastructure** has many leaders. It mobilizes the knowledge, talents, and perspectives of every segment of the community and builds strong connections and partnerships among community stakeholders. Programs of government, schools, churches, the business community, and others, operate in concert with one another, rather than independently. Citizen leaders work together to address community concerns, to attract more leaders, and to boost community participation.

Human infrastructure is also important. Indeed, the number one issue in economic development today is workforce quality. Companies will not choose to expand or locate in a community without educated and skilled workers. The highest priorities for rural economic development include maintaining excellent schools and strengthening the local workforce development system with active collaboration among business leaders, K-12 educators, and community college stakeholders.

Rural leaders also understand the importance of the **physical infrastructure**. They know that roads, water, gas, electricity, and sewers are necessary to support economic growth. For many companies and industries, transportation of data, images, voices, and sound is at least as important, if not more so, than the transportation of goods by highway, rail, and air. Communities without access to high-speed Internet cannot compete in the 21st century economy.”

<http://ecdi.wordpress.com/2013/04/18/building-the-infrastructure-for-rural-prosperity/>

4. ASSET INVENTORY

4.1 Land Use

As discussed during the Jan. 22, 2014 comments on land use will be limited in this report. Land use in Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships is very well documented in each municipal Official Plan (OP). These plans are designed to be living documents and should be updated at least every 5-10 years. There are tools to alter zoning and land use in a straightforward and fair way. These plans are designed to protect the environment while encouraging positive economic opportunities that best fit the community. Zoning maps and building permit fees for Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson are included in [Appendix A](#)

Section 6.0 Gap analysis identifies several issues and gaps related to the downtown core, and the retail sector of Ontario Street, in particular. Given the importance of an attractive, inviting "main street" to the perception of quality of life we see this element of the land use discussion to be of particular significance.

4.2 Labour Market

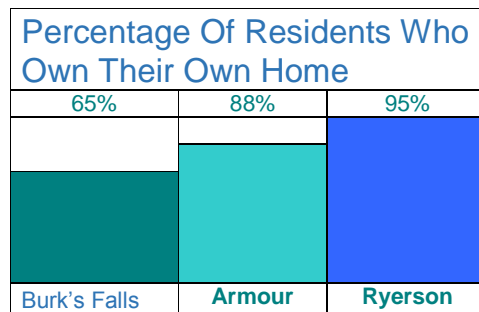
A note on statistics: We have used a large number of reports and demographic studies done at various times over the past eight years. The last National Household Survey for Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson conducted in 2011, has had data suppressed by StatsCan for reasons of reliability and confidentiality, i.e. the sample collected was too small to be meaningful or reliable, and may also have confidentiality issues, meaning that in such a small sample, it might be possible to identify a respondent by their replies. Because of this problem, some numbers from the 2006 Census have been used in parts of some demographics reports as late as 2012. We have endeavoured to give the latest information possible, and we advise readers to check the description of the survey area in every case when examining these reports as numbers will vary according to sample size and geographic area.

4.2.1 Occupational Wage Data See Appendix D, Community Demographic Reports (Population, Labour Force, Income, Wages)
 Wage by Industry (Average hourly wage in CAD\$): (For Northeast Ontario Economic Region)

Utilities	\$28.81	Professional, scientific, technical	24.53
Agriculture	-	Management	15.02
Forestry, fishing, mining, oil & gas	27.69	Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, leasing	21.80
Construction	22.56	Educational services	31.43
Manufacturing	27.18	Healthcare & social assistance	25.17
Wholesale trade	14.74	Accommodation and food services	11.94
Transportation	21.66	Other services	16.40
Information and cultural industries	20.07	Public administration	28.14
Goods producers	26.21		

Wage data is presented for Ontario's Economic Regions only.
 Source: Statistics Canada, special tabulation, unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, 2010

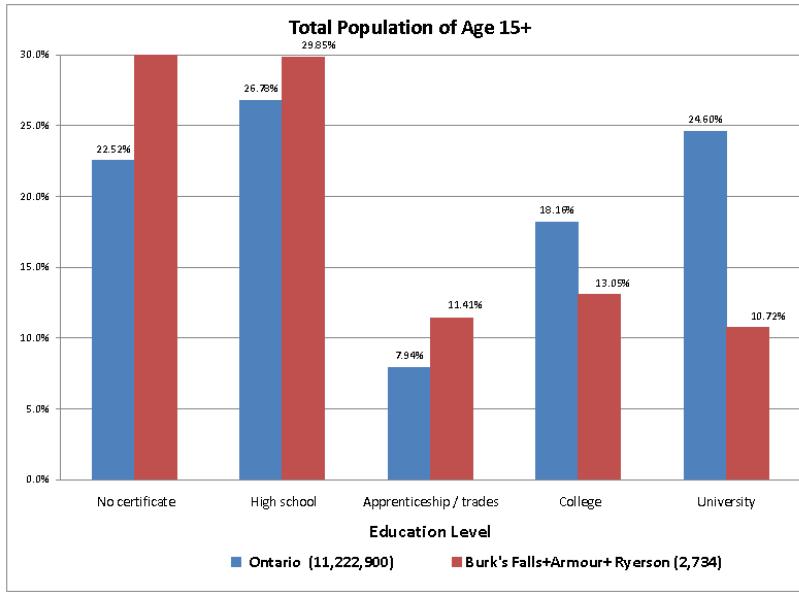
By comparison with the home ownership chart below a large percentage of Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson residents are employed in well-paying jobs.



Source: Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Manifold Data Mining, SuperDemographics 2012.

Clearly, the combination of availability of well-paying jobs and reasonable real estate prices equals affordability of home ownership in Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson.

**4.2.2 Education Levels as Compared to the Province of Ontario
see Appendix B and D**



Source: Manifold Data Mining, 2013

In two categories of education levels residents of Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson, when compared to provincial statistics, are ahead of the average.

- 11.4% percent of the population holds a trade certificate or diploma, which is higher than the provincial average of 8%.
- Those with a high school diploma comprise about 30%, which is higher than the provincial average of 26.8%.

In general, those in the higher categories make the highest wages and have the most disposable income. This accounts for approximately one-third of the population of Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson. **However, the transportation, trades, equipment operation, manufacturing and construction sectors account for more than half the occupations in the area.** The wage levels for these sectors are all higher than or equal to provincial averages and many of those employed in this sector account for a large proportion of those without a high school diploma or with only a high school diploma. The availability of high paying jobs in these sectors in Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson is yet another indicator of the affordability of the area, even though traditional indicators, such as a high percentage of university graduates, does not apply.

4.2.3 Workforce Trends

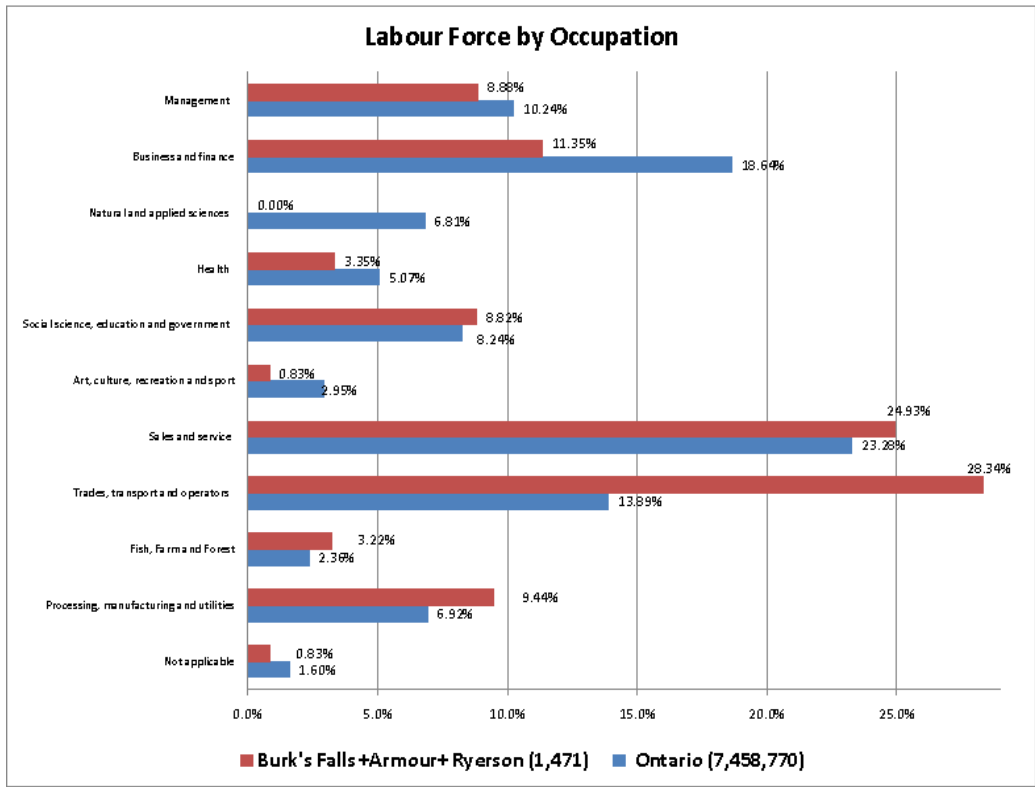
See Appendix B and D

Employment opportunities in long-term healthcare in the District of Parry Sound are very good. The number of healthcare workers employed in long-term care in the region has increased by 20% over 2006 figures.

Construction employment increased by 9.4% in Parry Sound district wide in 2011. Predictions for the next few years are good.

Manufacturing in BAR escaped the decline in the district and national trend with 9.44% employed and indications are excellent for increasing employment numbers in the future.

In the 'good news/bad news' category, Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson exceeds the provincial average for workers employed in skilled trades, as the numbers of qualified tradespeople (licensed plumbers, electricians, gas fitters etc.) at approximately 11% is slightly higher than the provincial average, however, some local employers still face difficulty in finding and retaining skilled workers. On the positive side, there are jobs to be filled in Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson, and this fact adds to the area's attractiveness. Current labour market predictions are for increasing employment opportunities for skilled trades as retirement takes its toll and jobs open up.



Source: Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2013

The manufacturing sector is extremely important to the economic fiber of Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson. In an era when manufacturing is moving offshore and communities across North America are competing for manufacturing businesses, Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson are well placed to build on their success. Regional Trends Predictions from OMAF and MRA cite an 8.5% increase in jobs between now and 2020. It is important to develop a business retention strategy that will ensure that our current manufacturing enterprises are content to stay here, as part of an overall Business Retention and Expansion Strategy.

4.2.4 Population and Age Distribution

[See Appendix B](#)

The estimated total population for Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson in 2012 was 3080. In Armour the population increased 9.8% over 2006. Burk's Falls' population increased by 8.3% and in Ryerson, the population fell by 7.6%. The 45 to 64 year old group grew

by approximately 33% since 2006 in Parry Sound District. Much of this growth is due to cottagers who are retiring to their seasonal properties.

These figures tell us that we can expect an increasing number of seniors as a percentage of the population. South Almaguin would do well to prepare for an increasingly older population and the infrastructure changes that will be required to service the health and housing needs of an aging population. While this change in the demographic will present challenges, it will also bring with it unprecedented opportunities for growth and development. Businesses and services that serve the seniors' market will be in high demand.

Many of these opportunities could serve to address the current issue of youth out-migration. With a real need for new services and a built-in market, the opportunities to establish new businesses to meet those needs are evident. A focus on serving the needs of the growing seniors' market could provide a strong base for a set of strategies to encourage our own young people to stay in Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson, or attract new, young residents to the area.

4.2.5 Health of the Local Population

For a complete analysis of the health of the local population, please refer to

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/health-sante/82-228/details/page.cfm?Lang=E7Tab=1&Geo1=HR&Code1=3457&Geo>

Statistics Canada Health Profile 2013 for the North Bay Parry Sound Health Unit. These tables show the incidence of certain chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis in the population compared to provincial averages. It also shows for instance, that obesity and overweight levels are a bit lower than the province as a whole and the percentage of children living in low income families is 12.7%, much lower than the provincial average of 17%. The individual perception of good mental health is higher than the average and perception of stress is lower than the provincial average.

The Almaguin Health Centre, the Community Care Access Centre and the Family Health Team do an excellent job providing education and services for health and wellness.

4.3 Transportation

4.3.1 Highways and Local Access Roads

Highways

In general the roads and highways are excellent and have provided efficient and safe access to the GTA, as well as southern and northern Ontario. The extension of the four lanes on Hwy 11 at Burk's Falls in 2012 was the last in a multi-year project to widen Highway 11 to four lanes between Huntsville and North Bay as planned in the 2005 Northern Ontario Highway Strategy. The widening will enable northern communities for future growth, support local businesses and promote economic development and tourism. Secondary Highway 520 to Magnetawan is also well-maintained year-round.

Local Road Access

Township roads provide access to all populated areas of both townships, and are well-maintained by their respective public works departments all year round as, emergency services, mail delivery, and school bus services rely on them. Many are paved or high floated.

In Burk's Falls there are two bridges that are on the municipal list of capital assets in need of repair.

1. The double lane bridge on Ontario Street crossing the Magnetawan River provides access to highway 520 and highway 11. The bridge provides emergency access to the area as well as a safe entrance to the community's largest employer. Ownership of this bridge (circa 1938) has been transferred to the municipality. It now requires approx. \$2 million in repairs. The community is seeking assistance from the province to address these needs.
2. The single lane bridge on Yonge St. is a high traffic area leading to another manufacturing location and the landfill site and providing emergency services, mail delivery, and school bus services to the Chetwynd Road area. This bridge requires approx. \$500,000 in repairs.

Armour Township has a total of 10 bridge structures, of which 4 have been replaced in the last ten years. This was made possible by funding from both Province and Federal governments. Bridge replacement will be a significant capital investment for Armour.

Ryerson Township has doubled its investment in the local road network over the last three years, with Council acknowledging road maintenance as a top priority. The Township has implemented a 10 year asset management plan to acquire government funding and to guide the renewal of aging roads' equipment and vehicles, the replacement and upgrade of two of its three bridges, and the further improvement of levels of service on the road network

Many secondary roads have been improved; some have been made into access roads serving the highway, and others have become service roads paralleling the highway or running close by. These improvements are significant in that, in most cases, they have improved the travel routes into the **Villages of Almaguin** and residential and business areas.

4.3.2 Motor Coach, Taxi and Transportation Services

A complete list of transportation assets is provided in [Appendix A](#)

Note on accessibility of local transportation:

A local bus service for residents of Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson to access retail shopping or public beaches, parks and community centers, either within the village or serving outlying areas of the two townships. For schedule and group bookings contact the Village of Burk's Falls municipal office at (705) 382-3138

Commented [jf1]:

4.3.3. Railways

Passenger Service:

Rail passenger service in Northern Ontario operated by Ontario Northland was terminated by the province of Ontario on Sept. 28, 2012.

Freight service: see [Appendix A](#)

4.3.4 Airways

The nearest airports with international passenger service are in North Bay (87 km) and Toronto (248 km).

[See Appendix A](#)

4.3.5. Waterways

The Magnetawan River is a heritage recreational waterway which runs from Burk's Falls to Ahmic Harbour with more than 40 miles of lakes and rivers. There are numerous lakes and streams in the Burk's Falls Armour and Ryerson Townships that include:

- Ahmic Lake,
- Bartlett Lake
- Crawford Lake,
- Deer Lake
- Doe Lake
- Horn Lake,
- Jacks Lake,
- Lake Cecebe,
- Little Doe Lake
- Three Mile Lake
- Midlothian Lake
- Neighick Lake (Beaver),
- Pickerel Lake,
- Rainy Lake
- Owl Lake
- Rat Lake
- The Magnetawan River
- Pike Lake

These waterways provide recreational opportunities to fish, swim, boat, kayak, or canoe. There are six sets of rapids on the Magnetawan River. The white water found on the river will give even the experienced white water rafter or kayaker a thrill. Excellent fishing can be found in the river with many varieties to catch including smallmouth bass, pike, perch, walleye, catfish, smelt, speckled trout and many more. There are many public beaches along the waterways and several marinas and boat rental opportunities.

[See Appendix A for complete listing of marinas.](#)

4.3.6 Routing and Resources for Mass Transit Trucks

There are excellent ramps on and off Hwy 11 servicing the communities of Burk's Falls Armour and Ryerson providing trucks safe access to service the area. In the event of an

emergency or road closure detour routes are available to access Hwy. 11, Hwy. 520 and Hwy. 69. In the event of an emergency the Ontario Provincial Police the Ministry of Transportation and the local municipalities communicate detours through the local emergency plans. Plans will be communicated through municipal websites:

<http://www.armourtownship.ca/> <http://www.ryersontownship.ca>
<http://www.burksfalls.net>

4.3.7. Terminals for people, goods or vehicles related to transportation networks

See Appendix A

4.3.8 Postal and Delivery Services

See Appendix A

4.4 Community Facilities

4.4.1 Parks and recreation

- Arenas, community centers and service organizations
- Public Parks and Public Water Access
- Conservation Areas
- Hiking, Walking and XC ski trails
- Playgrounds, Sports fields

ARENAS, COMMUNITY CENTRES, AND SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS	DESCRIPTION
ARMOUR RYERSON & BURK'S FALLS COMMUNITY ARENA	220 Centre Street, year round indoor ice rink, banquet hall and food concession. Public skating, figure skating lessons, hockey for youth and adults. Accessible parking. Elevator. Adjoins the Fairgrounds which has an exhibition hall for the Burk's Falls District Agricultural Society and holds a farmers' market weekly in the summer. (705) 382-3811 Burk's Falls Skate Park BMX and skateboarding on a paved surface. Please note that all safety equipment must be worn as this is an unsupervised area.
KATRINE COMMUNITY CENTRE	6 Browns Drive, Activities include 'Summer Fest', 'October Fest', Winter Carnival, Seniors Fun Day, Dances and Euchre tournaments. This accessible facility is available to rent (705) 382-5019
ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 405	9 Mary St, Burk's Falls Members' and guests Lounge open daily. Available for functions. Kitchen facilities. Accessible parking and entrances. (705) 382-3137
YOUNG AT HEART SENIOR'S CENTRE	Street Senior's Centre located at 136 Yonge St., Wednesday – Friday 1pm-3pm. General meeting is held on the last Tuesday of each month at 1:30 pm. (705) 382-2526
SERVICE CLUBS	Burk's Falls Lions Club, Ian Smith, President; Phone: 705-382-2418 Masonic Lodge #454, 26 Copeland Street
BURK FALLS FOOD BANK	(705) 382 3989
MEALS ON WHEELS	(705) 382-6286
ARMOUR ,RYERSON BURKS FALLS AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY	(705) 382-2022
BURK S FALLS HISTORICAL SOCIETY	(705) 382-3204
LAND OF LAKES PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL	(705) 382-2924
M.A. WITTICK PARENT ADVISORY BOARD	(705)382-3038

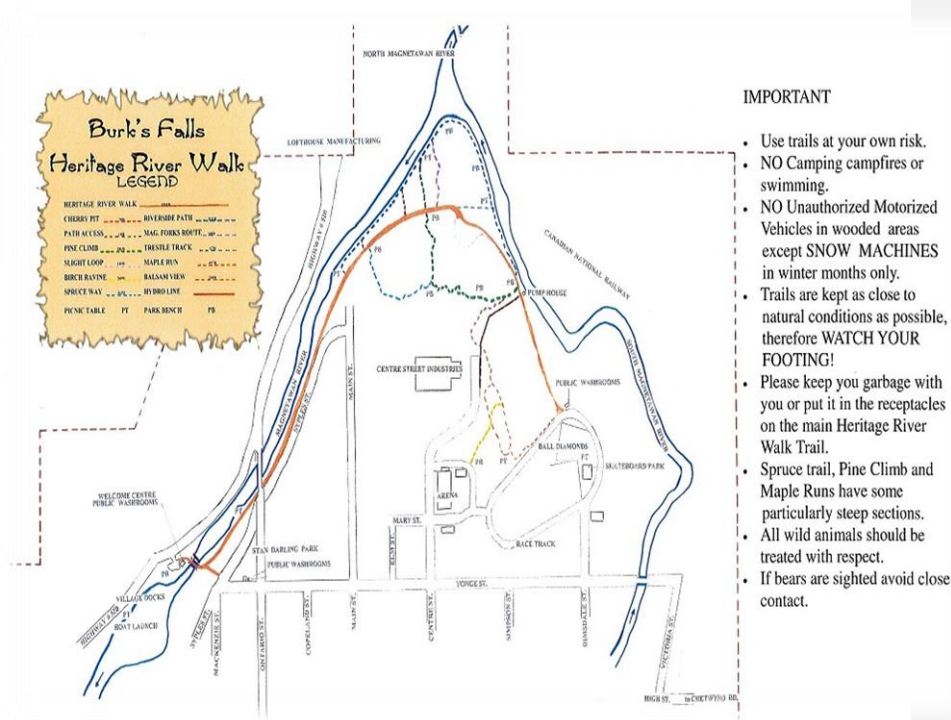
PUBLIC PARKS AND PUBLIC WATER ACCESS	DESCRIPTION
PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCH AREAS	Three Mile Lake access located at 12 Three Mile Lake Road. Jack Lake access is located at the end of Nicolia Drive off Pickerel & Jack Lake Road. Access to Pickerel Lake is at the end of Pickerel and Jack Lake Roads. Access to Doe Lake is located in Katrine at 1014 Ferguson Road and at 1686 Peggs Mountain Road. Government Dock and Boat launch, located on the Magnetawan River next to the Visitor Information Centre on Ryerson Crescent (Hwy. 520). Rockwyn Landing access to Lake Cecebe is located at the end of South Horn Lake Road
DOE LAKE PARK AND BEACH	Located in the Village of Katrine at 1014 Ferguson Road. This municipal park is complete with public beach, washroom building equipped with a wheelchair ramp, beach volleyball area, basketball pad and net, swings playground equipment and a boat ramp.
KENT ROAD PARK BEACH	Located at 180 Kent Road this property offers public access to Pickerel Lake. There is a beach along with picnic area and public washrooms.
DOE LAKE BEACH	Located in Ryerson Township at 1686 Peggs Mountain Road. Change house, parking, boat launch and portable washroom have been provided.
GOVERNMENT DOCK AND BOAT LAUNCH	Located on the Magnetawan River next to the Visitor Information Centre on Ryerson Crescent (Hwy. 520)
RICHARD THOMAS MEMORIAL PARK	Pickerel and Jack Lake Road, between the bridge and the railway tracks on the Magnetawan River
RAINY LAKE BEACH	636 Old Rainy Lake Rd., Burk's Falls
STAN DARLING PARK	Located at the corner of Ontario and Yonge St. next to the Arts Centre at 113 Yonge St.
BURKS FALLS COMMUNITY PARK AND PLAYGROUND	Located at 150 Houston St. next to the Burks Falls Family Health Team
BURK'S FALLS SKATE PARK	Located 220 Centre Street next to the Armour Ryerson & Burk's Falls Community Arena BMX and skateboarding on a paved surface

Visitor & Community Information Welcome Centre

The Welcome Centre located at 170 Ryerson Crescent, provides seasonal tourist information, public washrooms, a covered outdoor picnic area overlooking the falls and the Magnetawan River, and a café. The information centre is located next to the **covered footbridge**, the starting point for the Heritage River Walk. (705) 382-0115 For additional area information please see the attractions directory at www.burksfalls.net/tourism-areas-of-interest.htm

The Heritage River Walk stretches from the footbridge below the dam to the racetrack in the arena grounds. With the Magnetawan River on one side, and lush forest on the other, it is the perfect place for walking, picnicking, and sightseeing. The history of the Heritage River Walk spans back to the turn of the century. Today, this historic spur line

which is connected to a traditional footpath, provides visitors with a scenic walking trail. Continuous enhancements over the years have resulted in a well-groomed walking system.



4.4.2 Private Recreation Centres

A small, co-operative, self-serve, fitness centre is operated in the (Canusa Building) located at 400 Centre St., Contact Karen Sutcliff (705) 382-2767. There are private fitness centres, listed in the business directory. In addition, a number of health and fitness programs are offered by local instructors. Information on these programs is usually posted on the bulletin boards of the health centre, doctors' offices and arena.

4.4.3 Arts and Culture

South Almaguin Highlands is home to a thriving and diverse arts and culture community. It is comprised of more than 40 individual visual and performance artists, arts organizations, museums and a public library. Together, they form a strong and impressive presence for the Arts in this area.

Public Libraries

- There is one public library in the Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships. It is established under the Union Library section of the Public Libraries Act, "Union" referring to the union of municipalities in forming and supporting the library, and sharing governance responsibilities on its Board of Directors. Its name, Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson Union Public Library reflects a partnership, which also includes the township of McMurrich/Monteith. Library membership is free to residents of the Village of Burk's Falls, the Townships of Armour, Ryerson and McMurrich/Monteith.
- Non-resident membership is \$20.00 per year, per person.

The library offers books, DVDs and videos, children's programs, photocopying, faxing, laminating, free computer access, community information, reading/study space and computer training. The library also provides Inter-Library Loans, a borrowing service that allows free access to public library collections throughout Ontario, and fee-based access to collections across Canada and internationally.

The library was built in 1985, prior to the advent of personal computers and the public's expectations for access to digital information. The addition of public access computers, and information in a variety of digital formats, while essential to providing up-to-date and in-demand library service, has emphasized the fact that the space is small and cramped.

Access to good library services are an important consideration for many people in choosing to move to, or locate a business in a community, thus, the quality of the library has a potential impact on business attraction and retention.

*Public libraries improve the **market worth** of a community*

"By helping to attract new businesses and residents, modern library facilities can have a direct impact on increased tax dollars and local economic renewal... Since 1990, analysis conducted on site selection factors for new or relocated businesses showed that quality of life, including good schools and cultural and recreational facilities [i.e., libraries], ranked as the most important factor" (Ontario Libraries and Community Information Branch, 1995, p.8)

<http://en.copian.ca/library/research/dividend/page04.htm>

In addition to helping attract business, a good public library also plays an important role in supporting business in the community. Public Library resources, services and programs help to ensure that local businesses have the information they need to be successful and stay competitive.

"Our clients often include existing businesses planning growth and looking at market research and marketing, entrepreneurial startups, newcomers starting a business, and business students."

<http://bibliottawalibrary.ca/en/interest/business>

Museums and Arts Facilities



Burk's Falls and District Museum

Located at 112 Midlothian Road, The Burk's Falls and District Museum was opened in 1997 and is dedicated to the pioneers who first settled in this area. The building is that of the original schoolhouse, S.S. #4 Ryerson. Admission is free but donations are gratefully accepted. (705) 382-3138 for hours of operation.

Midlothian Castle and Gallery

The Screaming Heads project in Ryerson Township began over 15 years ago and today encompasses over 84 sculptures scattered along 310 acres occupying both sides of the road. This project is the work of local artist Peter Camari and visitors come from as far away as Europe to see it, since it has been featured in both Canadian and international media.

Location: Take Hwy 11 to Burk's Falls and then Hwy 520 toward Magnetawan. Turn off Hwy 520 onto Midlothian Road and follow for approximately 5 km. Admission is free of charge, but donations are accepted and appreciated.

Burk's Falls Arts and Crafts Club Gallery

The club is a group of over seventy members who are local artists and artisans. They provide both a gallery and workspace for members.

The Arts Centre is at 113 Yonge St. Burk's Falls. Winter hours are Friday, Saturday, Monday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Summer Hours are, Tuesday - Saturday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.



The Almaguin Highlands Arts Council is a not-for-profit organization serving Almaguin Highlands. This area is known for its diverse and talented artists. The Arts Council supports and promotes the arts through education, events, partnership and advocacy in Visual, Media, Performing and Literary Arts www.almaguinhighlandsartscouncil.com (705) 384-0590

4.5 Education

4.5.1 Elementary and Secondary

Elementary

The Near North District School Board operates two Elementary Schools in Burk's Falls, <http://www.nearnorthschools.ca/> (705) 472-8170

M.A. Wittick Jr. Public School, JK-Grade 6 plus the Early Years Program which hosts a free dinner every Tuesday from 5-7, www.nearnorthschools.ca/ma-wittick (705) 382-3116

Land of Lakes Senior Public School. Extended French Program for Grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 and a regular Grade 7 and 8 program for students living in the Burk's Falls, South River, Sundridge, Sprucedale and Magnetawan area. Land of Lakes has a large gymnasium with shower and change room facilities, a large library, a 200 seat raised theatre, a music room, a design and technology room, a science lab, a computer lab, a self-contained classroom for special education students, three small meeting rooms and a utility room with facilities for cooking and sewing. <http://www.nearnorthschools.ca/land-of-lake> (705) 475-2324

Secondary

The Almaguin Highlands Secondary School (Grade 9 – 12)

21 Mountainview Road, Box 250

South River, ON P0A 1X0

Phone: (705) 472-5563 Fax: (705) 386-0004

Website: www.nearnorthschools.ca/almaguin



Program Information

http://www.careercruising.com/individual/CP_CourseCalendar.aspx?SysG=86E76895-9A08-49DC-9622-A9132A5F8149&SchCode=ALM

Principal: Donna Breault

Vice Principals: Alison Herst and Ramona Lynn

Alternative Educational <http://www.nearnorthschools.ca/schools/alternative-education>

Near North Alternative Schools provide an alternative educational environment for students who wish to complete secondary credits. The schools work with both youth and adults in a variety of course delivery models. Students can work independently on courses needed for secondary graduation or they can participate in a work experience style of learning. Both provide students with the opportunity to apply to post-secondary schools or they gain the skills necessary to enter the workforce. There are two locations:

- Laurentian Learning Centre, 647 McKay Ave. North Bay (87 KM) (705) 472-5419
- Parry Sound Alternative Education Centre, 70 Isabella St., Parry Sound, (705) 771-956 (80 KM)

4.5.2 Post-Secondary

The closest full post-secondary schools are in North Bay (87 km.),

Nipissing University (705) 474-3450, www.nipissingu.ca/ and Canadore College (705) 474-7600 www.canadorecollege.ca/ both offer a wide range of degree and diploma options in both the humanities and sciences. Opportunities to commute daily to these schools are limited by current public transportation options but due to the recent highway 11 improvements, commuting by car is an option. Carpooling opportunities are available. Continuing education classes at both the university and community college level are available in the following locations:

Huntsville (44 km.)

The University of Waterloo Centre for the Environment
87 Forbes Hill Drive
Huntsville, ON P1H 0B6
www.uwaterloo.ca/waterloo-summit-centre/about-waterloo-summit-centre
(705) 571-0259

Bracebridge (74 km)

Nipissing University 125 Wellington Street
Bracebridge, ON, Canada P1L 1E2,
<http://www.nipissingu.ca/departments/muskoka/Pages/default.aspx>
(705) 645-2921

Georgian College Muskoka Campus (74 km)

111 Wellington, Bracebridge
<http://www.georgianc.on.ca/coned09/campuses/muskoka/>
(705) 646-7629

4.6 Places of Worship

Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships are home to a variety of churches, most of which operate year round, and some provide seasonal services, with home parishes in surrounding communities. Together, these places of worship count multiple hundreds of local residents in their congregations.

Burk's Falls Church of Christ
51 Ontario St. Burk's Falls, ON
P0A 1C0
(705) 382-9775

Burk's Falls Baptist Church
165 Ontario St., Burk's Falls, ON
P0A 1C0
(705) 382-1988

Chetwynd Community Church
1193 Chetwynd Rd
Burk's Falls, ON, P0A 1C0
(705) 382-3463

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Yonge St.
Burk's Falls, On, P0A1C0
(705) 382-2203

New Hope Fellowship Dream Centre
44 Commercial Dr.
Burk's Falls, ON, P0A 1C0
(705) 382-0755

Church of the Holy Spirit
Roman Catholic Church
Highway 520,
Burk's Falls, ON P0A 1C0
(705) 636-5334

Burk's Falls United Church
Yonge St
Burks Fall's, ON, P0A 1C0
(705) 382-3325

4.7 HEALTH CARE AND WELLNESS

4.7.1 Physicians and Health Care Teams and

4.7.2 Allied Health Care Providers.

SERVICE	DETAILS
BURK'S FALLS FAMILY HEALTH TEAM	3 family physicians, 1 Nurse Practitioner, several RNs, and a Mental Health Counselor Appointments for patients enrolled with the physicians. Ontario Telemedicine Site for all local residents Mon-Wed 9 am-4:30 pm, 5 pm-7 pm by appointment Thurs. 9 am-4:30 pm Fri 9 am-12 noon Serves Armour, Burk's Falls, Kearney, Magnetawan, Perry, Ryerson Family Health Team (705) 382-4022 Physician's office (705) 382-4020
DOCTOR DAVID DEMPSTER	Private practice Family Physician Open Monday to Friday. 162 Houston St Burk's Falls (705) 382-2207
ALMAGUIN HIGHLANDS HEALTH CENTRE	Community Care Access Centre, homecare nurses, , lab/blood work services, x-ray services, lab/ECG, physiotherapy, The Friends Day Away Program, registered massage therapy, diabetes health network, foot care clinic, addiction outreach, Ontario Telemedicine Network, AA meetings and Al-anon meetings. 1-888-533-2222, pharmacy (next door)
LONG TERM CARE	Long term care beds are arranged through the Community Care Access Centre, waiting lists are long for care close to home. Given the current population statistics and the growing need for long term care South Almaguin is facing a crisis which must be addressed if we wish to keep our elderly and persons with disabilities in their own community. 1-888-533-2222
MUSKOKA-PARRY SOUND COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE	Offices in Bracebridge, (705) 645-2262, Parry Sound, (705) 746-4264 Sundridge, (705) 384-5392 and Huntsville, (705) 789-8891. The service offers crisis support and intake, supportive housing, community outreach and support, counseling, psychotherapy, and education service, and transitional case management, as well as adult protective services, aboriginal mental health and partner assault program.

4.7.3 Wellness and Fitness

The Burk's Falls Family Health Team and the Almaguin Highlands Health Centre arrange seminars and programs for wellness and fitness as the need arises and budget allows and are open to requests. There are private fitness centres, listed in the business directory. In addition, a number of health and fitness programs are offered by local instructors. Information on these programs is usually posted on the bulletin boards of the health centre, doctors' offices and arena.

4.7.4 Accessibility

Accessibility for the programs offered at the Almaguin Health Centre in Burk's Falls is excellent and includes doctors' offices, lab, x-ray and physiotherapy. Urgent care facilities and out-patient services are at the Huntsville Hospital, 40 km. south, a 30 minute drive. Mental health services are located in Sundridge, a 15 minute drive. For seniors and the disabled, both a wheelchair van based in Burk's Falls and volunteer drivers for those not requiring wheelchair transportation, are available by appointment to drive clients to medical appointments. A small fee of \$0.25 per km. is charged. This service is funded for 5 years starting in February of 2014. Applicants for the program must apply to the East Parry Sound Community Support Services Program. Contact Shelly Bateman, Linda Beatty or Leslie Price at 1-888-521-0000 or (705) 724 6028.

4.8 Social Services

District of Parry Sound Social Services administers several programs: The Ontario Works Program provides financial assistance and employment supports to assist individuals with their basic needs and accommodation while focusing on obtaining paid employment. The Ontario Works Program also makes referrals to the Ontario Disability Support Program for those individuals that are not able to seek employment due to long-term health issues. Parry Sound District Social Services also operates the Children's Services Department. This includes two licensed childcare facilities close to the South Almaguin area, First Steps Child Care Centre in South River and the Highlands Children's Centre in Emsdale and several after school programs. District wide programs include the Home Child Care Program, Early Years and Integration Support Services. Children's Services provides financial assistance to parents deemed in financial need within the District to assist in paying for the cost of childcare in a licensed program. Community Services administers the Social Housing Program, Esprit Place, Adult Protective Services, and several other programs.

Contact for Ontario Works	
South River Office	Parry Sound Office
16 Toronto Ave., Box 1600, South River, ON P0A 1X0 (705) 386-2358 or 1-800-661-3230	1 Beechwood Drive, Parry Sound, ON P2A 1J2 (705) 746-8886 or 1-800-461-4464

Contact for Housing and Community Services	
South River Office	Parry Sound Office
16 Toronto Ave., South River, ON P0A 1X0 (705) 386-2358 or 1-800-461-3230	1 Beechwood Dr., Parry Sound, ON P2A 1J2 (705) 774-9600 or 1 877-767-6060

Contact for Children's Services	
South River Office	Parry Sound Office
16 Toronto Ave., South River, ON P0A 1X0 (705) 386-2967 or 1-800-563-4201	1 Beechwood Dr., Parry Sound, ON P2A 1J2 (705) 746-7777 or 1-800-461-4464

The Children's Aid Society

The Children's Aid Society (CAS) of the District of Nipissing and Parry Sound is a community service agency mandated by the Province of Ontario through the Child and Family Services Act, 2000 to ensure the best interests, protection and well-being of children. The Society also provides programming for youth who have had conflicts with the law, as well as offering volunteer programs for early child intervention.
(705) 382-1333

Employment Services

The employment resource centre, operated by Northern Lights Canada and located at 205 Ontario St. offers a variety of services and support programs for employers and job seekers and acts as a gateway for government training and employment programs.
(705) 382-6100

4.9 Public Utilities Infrastructure

4.9.1 Water and Sewer

Burk's Falls is the only municipality between Huntsville and Powassan to offer both water and sewer services. The system has a small surplus capacity and plans are underway for upgrading and expansion. The municipality has extended these services to nearby Armour Township to facilitate the retail and service developments along Commercial Drive. Phone (705) 382-3138 after hours (705) 783-8255

This utility will play a key role in attracting development opportunities. The municipality has a long-term plan to upgrade and maintain service. Senior level government programs are being explored and applied to for funding assistance.

4.9.2 Power

Lakeland Power Distribution

Burk's Falls Generating Station is a two-unit hydroelectric station located on the Magnetawan River in Burk's Falls, Ontario. The station was originally built in 1985. The station has an installed capacity of 1.12 MW at a head of 8.5 metres.

The headwork consists of a concrete dam with one sluice gate and two log spill bays. The concrete intake is equipped with main trashracks and gain slots for dewatering the plant. One concrete penstock conveys water to the powerhouse. Water is discharged into the Magnetawan River at the base of Burk's Falls.

The station is connected to Lakeland Power Distribution's 12.5 kV feeder from Burk's Falls. <http://www.lakelandpower.on.ca> 1-888-282-7711

Northland Power This private sector project does not provide power directly to the area. It feeds into the Hydro One system. www.northlandpower.ca (416) 962-6262

Burk's Falls East is completed and on line and features a 10 MW ground-mounted photovoltaic solar project in Armour Township. It includes 40,000 to 50,000 solar panels and up to 30 DC to AC inverters.

Burk's Falls West is under construction and when completed will feature a 10 MW ground-mounted photovoltaic solar project located on Highway 520, west of Burk's Falls in Armour Township. When completed, it will include 40,000 to 50,000 solar panels and up to 30 DC to AC inverters

Natural Gas

Natural gas is available in the Village of Burks Falls providing an inexpensive and reliable source of energy to support residential, commercial and manufacturing sector growth.

Union Gas 1-888-774-3111

4.9.3 Information and Telecommunications

Several internet service providers are in the area to supply high speed communications. They are listed in the asset inventory, [Appendix A](#). The availability of high-speed internet is a major consideration when determining site selection for large and medium businesses as well as small entrepreneurs who work from home.

4.10 Additional Elements

4.10.1 Private Housing

Based on the following chart showing 2013 real estate sales, a 3 bedroom non-waterfront home in the Burks Falls Armour and Ryerson area sold for an average of \$166,938 while the same sold for \$223,311 in Huntsville. It also shows the property sale values for this area are increasing faster than those in Huntsville.

Sales for Jan. 2011 to May 2011 compared to Jan 2013 to May 2013
Based on 3 bedrooms with year round access

Geographic Area	Jan 1 2011 to May 27 2011			Jan 1 2013 to May 27 2013		
	Average \$	Average \$	Average \$	Average \$	Average \$	Average \$
	Waterfront Res.	Waterfront Rec.	Non-Waterfront- Res	Waterfront Res.	Waterfront Rec.	Non-Waterfront- Res
Huntsville	\$310,814.00	\$256,000.00	\$218,825.00	\$417,375.00	\$293,500.00	\$223,311.00
Lake of Bays	\$441,750.00	\$505,909.00	\$208,333.00	\$379,500.00	\$399,852.00	\$175,270.00
Kearney/Perry/Amour/ McMurrich/Monteith/ Ryerson/Burks Falls/ Novar/Emsdale	\$371,000.00	\$224,500.00	\$152,397.00	\$313,000.00	\$231,667.00	\$166,938.00
			Percent Change	-15.60%	3.19%	9.54%

Ken Mashinter (705) 636-0168, The Lakelands Association of REALTORS

4.10.2 Public Housing

The District of Parry Sound Social Services offers public housing in Burks Fall's through the Local Housing Corporation (LHC) – East Side. This includes 5 townhouse units, 6 semi-detached houses and a 23 unit apartment building. Currently there is no availability and applicants go on a wait list. Wait times for a single person are on average one to six years, and for families one to three years. (705) 746-7777

In addition, Fell Homes (705) 382-2467, operates "Legion Village", a senior's complex which has 29 rent-geared-to-income units. Rent will vary based on the applicant's income, from subsidized to market value. Veterans (or their spouse) get priority for any available units.

Clearly there is a need for more geared to income housing, given current wait time.

4.10.2 Natural Resources

- The South Almaguin area has aggregate which is in high demand for construction and landscaping. Provincial figures indicate that less than 2% of the population are employed in this industry.
- This area has hydroelectric power generation as well as two major, private sector solar generating locations.
- Small stands of red pine planted from the 1950's to the 1980's are now being harvested commercially but in general, forestry only employs about 3% of the population.
- While not located in Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships, the graphite mine in Kearney will soon require approximately 80 skilled and semi-skilled workers, which will have an additional impact on Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships very soon.
- The "Ring of Fire" development in Northern Ontario will also have ripple effects on the local economy.
- There is an opportunity for small farming operations as discussed in section 2.2 Summary of Recommendations

4.10.3 Historic Preservation

There are Heritage Groups and committees in the area, but there are no Heritage Committees of Council, mandated to advise on designated properties in Burk's Falls Ryerson or Armour. The historical society maintains a small local museum, as mentioned in Sec.4.4.3.

There is a process under The Ontario Heritage Act for properties and heritage landscapes to be designated as historically significant. A shared heritage committee for Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships would be the best option for any historic designation, preservation or funded heritage event such as Doors Open Ontario. This committee could be of great assistance in developing a community improvement project by developing a façade study to reference future improvements.

4.10.4 Business Climate

The business climate in South Almaguin can be viewed from several sectors:

- The manufacturing sector in the area is healthy with a larger percentage employed than the provincial average. This sector has difficulty in finding qualified employees with a good work ethic.
- The tourism sector is benefiting from the completion of the highway 11 project, the access to Algonquin Provincial Park, the Canadian dollar, the cost of visiting Muskoka and the natural beauty of the area. Global climate change is expected to positively expand tourism opportunities in this area.
- The retail sector is challenged with the completion of the highway 11 project and the big box development in Huntsville. The number of vacant stores on Ontario St., the hours of operation, the poor perception of the area from staff working in

the retail sector and the lack of sidewalks and transportation to the retail sector on Commercial Drive are all major challenges.

- The area is a popular retirement destination. Local services will benefit from this exodus from the south.
- Building and trades are busy and appear to be prosperous. Although building permit numbers have dropped in the past few years, environmental scans indicate that it is difficult to find tradespeople to complete work. Many local projects are completed by tradespeople from Huntsville.
- Transport services appear to be healthy as a result of the highway expansion project and the recent rail siding/distribution centre opening in South River.

4.10.5 Impact of Global Markets and Climate Change

Shifting global markets have had a major effect on the North American economy. In the late 80's continuing through the 90's the US and Canada suffered the loss of hundreds of thousands of high paid manufacturing jobs. These jobs were exported overseas never to return.

This was further exacerbated by the advent of the Big Box phenomenon. Big Boxes were faceless, highly price sensitive, competitors to small locally owned retail shops, usually the heart of the community. Thus began the attraction of regional shopping and the demise of the local small community retail experience.

All across Ontario traditional downtown economies were failing. In the early 2000's community leaders started to look at long term imaginative plans to revitalize their communities. These strategic plans looked at what was happening in their communities and regions, decided where they wanted to be in the future and what they had to do to get there.

Communities that took action were usually assisted by support from senior levels of government eager for the additional tax revenues needed to support growing social costs.

Surrounding South Almaguin there are several examples of community improvement programs that are showing excellent results in the local generation and retention of jobs. Callander and North Bay are excellent examples of community regeneration in their downtown cores that had suffered during the economic downturn. Through well planned strategic directions the downtown/waterfront areas are now vibrant and are supporting job growth and tourism.

To the south Huntsville is another example where well over 2,000 manufacturing jobs were lost and the Big Box stores were introduced on the outskirts of the traditional downtown shopping area. The downtown businesses and the local elected officials recognized the need for action and developed a community economic development plan. Not only did the leaders develop the plan but took full responsibility in the implementation of the plan. Now the downtown core has been restored, retail activity is high, tourism is flourishing and many new employment and educational opportunities have expanded

There are several components to planning and implementation of any strategic economic development plan but the most important component is to have the absolute support of the locally elected community leaders and the community. There is a direct relationship to the health of a downtown core and the future success of the community.

Waterfront redevelopment has been at the heart of success of many northern Ontario Communities. The Almaguin region next to the “World Famous” Algonquin Provincial Park is fortunate to have the small town atmosphere and natural beauty that will play a major role in the area’s future.

Global climate change is predicted to benefit this area by moderating the annual temperature ranges and expanding experiential tourism opportunities and the demand for locally produced items, thus expanding and opening new job opportunities.

4.10.6 Complementary and Competitive industries

There are no apparent competitive industries in the area that will have an impact on employment other than those in the retail and seasonal tourism sectors.

There is a vibrant and potentially growing employment opportunity in the local manufacturing sector. This sector is experiencing challenges in finding qualified employees. This opportunity is under study with local employment and educational providers. Local education providers and school curriculum seem out of step with what is needed by employers. This opportunity must be addressed by elected officials to ensure resources are put in place to support the demand.

4.10.7 Crime Rate, Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Ontario Provincial Police

North East Region Headquarters
911 A Gormanville Road
North Bay, ON
P1B 8G3 (705) 475-260

The boundaries of the Region stretch from Parry Sound and Burk’s Falls in the south, to Moosonee and Hearst in the north, and from Mattawa in the east to White River in the west.

- The North East Region of the Ontario Provincial Police, encompasses a vast geographical area of 285,125 square kilometers.
- A permanent population of 285,000 increases to 400,000 in the summer months with the annual influx of seasonal residents to cottage country.
- Work with 9 Municipal Police Services and 4 stand alone First Nations Police Agencies
- Partnerships with other government and volunteer agencies, such as, School Boards, Probation and Parole, Ministry of Natural Resources, and Victims Crisis Assistance Referral Services (VICARS).

Almaguin Highlands OPP Detachment,

46 Hwy 520

Burk's Falls, ON P0A 1C

Serves from Novar to south of Trout Creek,

Staff levels: 25 police officers, 3 full time and 5 part time non police personnel

The local detachment maintains a full time Community Service officer working with local schools and organizations.

Municipal councils receive annual reports on crime and police activity.

Staff Sergeant: Stacey Whalley, Non-Emergencies (705) 382-2015.

Emergencies (911)

The Burk's Falls & District Fire Department is a volunteer fire department with 21 firefighters located at 162 Main St. in Burks Fall's.

Dave McNay, Fire Chief, Non-Emergencies (705) 382-4010

Martyn Payge, Fire Prevention Officer, Non-Emergencies (705) 382-4010

Emergencies (911)

Ambulance Service

The West Parry Sound Health Centre Ambulance Service administers the Ambulance Office in Burk's Falls at 105 Main St.

Services include, emergency response, treatment and transportation to a medical facility or between facilities. The Air Ambulance Service provides transport between hospitals in the region and other Ontario hospitals.

Other services

* An Ambulance Awareness Program, and other public relations activities.

* CPR and First Aid training.

Non-Emergencies (705) 382-3400

Emergencies (911)

4.10.12 Cost of Living Index

The cost of living index in this area is consistent with the Canadian rate of 1.2 % in December 2013. Cost of housing, both sales and rental, in South Almaguin is lower than in Muskoka and has a positive impact on cost of living. The cost of provincial vehicle licensing is lower in Northern Ontario.

4.11 Tax Assessments

The following spreadsheet illustrates several nearby communities and their respective tax rates. Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson maintain very attractive tax rates. These rates are a result of prudent fiscal management by elected officials and senior municipal management. Burks Falls Armour and Ryerson Townships are well positioned to maintain existing infrastructure while sustaining competitive tax rates. The absence of development fees and business taxes are a definite asset when considering investment in the South Almaguin area. It is recommended that future tax rates be considered in the context of meeting provincially mandated, asset management plans.

	Community	Residential	Multi Residential	Commercial Occupied	Industrial Occupied	Permanent Population
1	Burk's Falls	0.01392144	0.01639667	0.01531358	0.01977401	1007
2	Armour	0.00870582	0.0088682	0.01379265	0.01017967	1433
3	Ryerson	0.01144310	0.01144310	0.01712528	0.02160556	640
4	Huntsville	0.01167580	0.01167580	0.01716470	0.01884460	20,000
5	Perry Township	0.00777257	0.0083921	0.0147808	0.01026746	2317
6	Callander	0.01070932	0.01380577	0.02213347	0.0241681	3864
7	East Ferris	0.00910279	0.00910279	0.01558538	0.01794187	4750
8	Mattawa	0.0219862	0.03003797	0.04433824	0.05568581	2023
9	Parry Sound	0.01312199	0.01878235	0.02638921	0.02329805	6190
10	Kearney	0.00955305	0.00955305	0.01408847	0.01368218	841
11	Strong	0.0102463	0.0111330	0.01684540	0.02292370	1304
12	Sundridge	0.01612763	0.01615929	0.02593251	0.02780173	857
13	Magnetawan	0.00919477	0.0168806	0.0146579	0.01375414	1454

4.12 Incentives

The communities of Burks Falls Armour and Ryerson have no development fees or business tax. In other municipalities south of Almaguin development fees and business taxes are in addition to municipal taxes. This is a benefit to potential investment. Parking in the area is both abundant and free. The Village of Burks Falls offers an excellent municipal water and sewer service.

Burks Falls, Ryerson and Armour Townships have industrial/commercial zoned land as outlined within their Official Plans contained within [Appendix A](#)

Funding Programs

There are several senior level government funding opportunities covering a wide range of private and public sector programs. These programs are designed to attract investment and assist communities with infrastructure needs.

The list below covers a variety of federal and provincial programs. New programs are being introduced on a regular basis. For specific funding program, we recommend, and have had success with, contacting our elected federal and provincial representatives directly.

Provincial Rep. Norm Miller MPP	Federal Rep. Tony Clement MP
Riding Office, 165 Manitoba Street Bracebridge , Ontario P1L 1S3 Toll Free 1-888-267-4826 norm.miller@pc.ola.org	Riding Office, 110 Main St. Sundridge , Ontario P0A 1Z0 (third Thursday of every month, 1pm-3pm) Telephone: 1-866-375-8669 Tony.Clement@parl.gc.ca

PROVINCIAL PROGRAMS	
Reference guide to programs	http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/prodconsum/groups/
Ontario government a-z list of funding opportunities	http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/
Celebrate Ontario	http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/GrantsPortal/en/OntarioGrants
Explorers Edge	http://explorersedge.ca/
Rural Economic Development	http://www.grants.gov.on.ca/
Ministry of Northern Development and Mines	http://www.mndm.gov.on.ca/en
Northern Ontario Heritage Fund	http://nohfc.ca/en/programs
Incentives Programs for Business	http://www.investinontario.com/en/Pages/
The Ontario Trillium Foundation	http://www.otf.ca/en/
FEDERAL PROGRAMS	
FedNor	http://fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/home
Community Futures	http://fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/fn03478.html
Federal Funding Programs	http://www.canadabusiness.ca/eng/page/2848//

4.13 Community Improvement Plans

The very small Town of Blue Mound Illinois (pop 1,161) succeeded in facilitating the establishment of **20 new businesses** and in expanding public and health services. The following were Blue Mound's ingredients for success:

1. Community leadership,
2. Community support/involvement,
3. Sound planning (recognizing needs, setting a future vision, building on
4. strengths),
5. Organization (of people and limited resources),
6. A sense of accomplishment (success leads to more success)

March 2003 report titled "Towards More Effective Rural Economic Development in Ontario"

Community improvement plans have helped communities all across Ontario, Canada and in many U.S. states. The key to a successful Community Improvement Plan is the community's commitment. Many communities realize that the long term approach is necessary to make it work.

Two Community Improvement Plans included in [Appendix F](#) are Callander and Huntsville. Both plans set out the community's vision and provided a well-organized approach. These plans are well articulated and presented in a clear, easy to understand framework. These plans provide a general picture of the geographic area, tools available to applicants and long range committed resources. These Community Improvement Plans are very relevant as they have contributed to the economic revitalization of two nearby communities. Included in [Appendix F](#) are examples of application forms and guidelines.

5.0 Market Study



Consistent with the terms of the RFP, we have developed a Market Study that is based on the work we have completed in the asset inventory. Further, we have identified the two sectors on which that Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson would do well to concentrate, in order to develop and attract investment. They are:

- 1. Tourism, Hospitality and Retail**
- 2. Seniors' and Retirees' Services**

As we have discussed in detail in Section 4.0 Asset Inventory, the picture of the area's assets is clear and compelling. During the course of our research, which provided the factual basis for the Asset Inventory, we established a comprehensive understanding of the individual characteristics and factors that contribute to the area's strengths; taken together, they form the basis and rationale for our recommendations.

Our work in developing this Market Study was undertaken in close consultation with the Community Development Officer, the Clerks of each of the three municipalities, and other members of municipal staffs, as appropriate. As well, we made it a priority to speak with Reeve Cathy Still of Burk's Falls, Reeve Bob MacPhail of Armour Township, and Reeve Glenn Miller of Ryerson Township, and with members of each of their Councils.

Further, we interviewed the business leaders who have had an impact on the area through their efforts to invest and hire locally.

All of these conversations have proven to be immensely valuable, with these community leaders providing their insights and depth of knowledge about the area, its people and its strengths and concerns.

Summary of Key Assets and Challenges

<p>Assets</p>	<p>Beauty of natural surroundings – Magnetawan Waterway, abundance of lakes, location at the edge of Algonquin Provincial Park. Excellent transportation routes, good exposure from Highway 11. The traffic count on Highway 11 is approximately 11,000 vehicles per day. Many excellent local human resources in our community – SAHEDC, Chamber of Commerce, small businesses, arts groups, historical society, agricultural society, other clubs and organizations. Good business and employment support systems both federal and provincial – NOHFC, FedNor, Employment Resource Centre. Well above average medical, social and community services. No development fees = great encouragement to builders. Low tax rates. The only community between Huntsville and Powassan to offer municipal water and sewer services. Good to excellent options for Internet connectivity</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<p>Infrastructure needs constant updates to maintain provincial standards, low tax base, small aging population. Need accommodation in Village for tourists and business travelers. Need hiking, biking, and XC ski trails. Local attractions, retail areas, information centre, would benefit from better signage. Ontario Street - many retail venues empty, unattractive appearance. Retention of major employers. Need more skilled and semi-skilled workers</p>

The following recommendations have been made after gathering and examining the community assets identified within the framework of this study

1. TOURISM, HOSPITALITY AND RETAIL

Develop regional marketing opportunities in collaboration with Explorers Edge. Explorers Edge has the staff, resources and the provincial responsibility to promote tourism in this area.

- Visitation to the Explorers Edge area was 4.7 million in 2011, with estimated spending of \$598 million.
- Of these visits, 96% are from Ontario, with 25% from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).
- The average party size is 3 and 3 nights as the average number of overnight visits
- About 25% are over 55 and half come during July-September.
- Same day visitors spent an average of \$120/trip.
- Overnight visitors spent four times as much per person as same-day visitors.

***Explorers Edge Markets –
2011***

Where are the Visitors Coming From? = Target Market



MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT

Visits by Census Division Origin

Origin	Visits	% of Visits
Simcoe County	280,401	20.3%
Toronto Metropolitan Municipality	203,675	14.8%
Peel Regional Municipality	185,984	13.5%
Muskoka District Municipality	82,340	6.0%
Halton Regional Municipality	55,410	4.0%
Niagara Regional Municipality	53,610	3.9%
York Regional Municipality	52,960	3.8%
Waterloo Regional Municipality	52,560	3.8%
Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Municipality	50,277	3.6%
Durham Regional Municipality	47,237	3.4%

Origin	% of Visits	% of \$
Ontario	84%	82%
U.S.	4%	12%
Overseas	1%	3%

- 20% of visits to PSD originate from Simcoe County, 15% from Toronto Metropolitan Municipality, and 14% from Peel Region.

Source: Statistics Canada, Travel Survey of the Residents of Canada 2010, International Travel Survey 2010, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport





Small Hotels

Attract a full service hotel chain that will serve the tourism, traveling and business sectors. **Local manufacturers in the region send over 400 room nights per year outside the area**

Bed and Breakfast



Many small communities have successfully increased their capacity to house visitors by encouraging the development of B and Bs. A good B and B Business Development plan for Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson would include Target Marketing. These three markets are most important to this area:

1. **Weekend getaway customers**
2. **Travelers**
3. **Local business-related travelers:** now, local businesses send their employees to Huntsville for accommodation.

A municipal association with a Canadian and/or Ontario B and B Association, which can be advertised on local business and municipal websites adds a promotional advantage to the area and signals credibility to accommodation seekers.

An excellent sample from a community is Oregon appears the following link http://www.mplans.com/bed_breakfast_marketing_plan/marketing_strategy_fc.php

Work with local providers of “Experiential Tourism”, adventure, bike, kayak, canoe, paddle board rental, trails development



Favorite Activities in Algonquin Park, Muskoka, Parry Sound and the Almaguin Highlands

Explorers Edge Regional Report – Sept. 2012	
Total Trips Reported by Past 12 Month GTA Visitors	
Question: Which one, if any, of these activities was the MAIN REASON for taking this trip?	
Wildlife / Bird Watching	12%
Boating / Sailing	20%
Shopping	15%
Visiting Small Towns and Villages	15%
Dining In Fine Restaurants	15%
Visiting Scenic Landmarks	14%
Water Activities (e.g. Waterskiing, Diving, Windsurfing)	12%

- Identify and contact potential retailers for the supply of clothing, fuel, fast food, (Subway) local deli
- Develop programs to support local farmers and artists (websites and other cooperative programs)
- Provide and advertise high speed on Ontario St.

- Develop improved signage at strategic locations. Provide reasons to get traffic to visit downtown thus encouraging visitation and retail sales.



Courtesy of the Town of Bracebridge

2. Senior and Retiree Services

Recommended Actions Needed to Realize the Opportunity

The fastest growing sector of the population in Burk's Falls, Armour and Ryerson is retirees.

- A seniors housing complex on serviced land near amenities is required to meet the needs of the largest growing sector.

Employment opportunities in long-term healthcare in the District of Parry Sound are good. The number of healthcare workers employed in long-term care in the region has increased by 20% over 2006 figures. The estimated total population for BAR in 2012 was 3080. In Armour the population increased 9.8% over 2006. Burk's Falls' population increased by 8.3% and in Ryerson, the population fell by 7.6%. Ryerson is also the least populated township with 640 residents. The 45 to 64 year old group grew by approximately 33% since 2006 in Parry Sound District. Much of this growth is due to cottagers who are retiring to their seasonal properties. These figures tell us that we can expect an increasing number of seniors as a percentage of the population. South Almaguin must prepare for an increasingly older population and the infrastructure changes that will be required to service the health and housing needs of an aging population. At the same time, strategies to encourage young people to stay in BAR or locate in BAR must be actively pursued.

- Additional medical care (Dentist, Massage Therapist, Physical Therapist, Chiropractor)
- Continued senior centre support
- The library strategic plan should be included in the Strategic Economic Development Plan
- Retail services

Due to the small size and limited selection of the existing grocery store there is considerable leakage to Huntsville. In preparation for the regional shopping centre in Huntsville, the developers prepared a regional impact study including the BAR area. <http://huntsville.ca/en/townHall/HuntsvilleStudies.asp>

It should be noted that this study took place before Wal-Mart and Home Depot were built. Since this time Wal-Mart has expanded into groceries. While it is difficult to determine this lost revenue it will be significant when consideration is given to the number of seasonal visitors and recent retirees. Other retail services and hours of operation in Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson are limited and the spending leakage will mostly go south.

In addition to the focus on the two identified sectors above **it is recommended that a Community Improvement Plan be started and that a Business Retention and Expansion Program be part of this overall program.**

3. Community Improvement and Retention of Existing Business

- Initiate a Community Improvement Program
- Several excellent programs have been initiated in small towns across Ontario and the US. Two excellent programs are included in [Appendix F](#)
- Develop a combined, long term capital plan and budget to upgrade infrastructure
- Expand membership on SAHEDC to include representation from manufacturing, retail, tourism and emergency services. This will provide a quick feedback of sector opportunities and issues
- Implement a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E)
- A BR&E plan is a community-based economic development program with a focus on supporting existing businesses. It provides a systematic approach to assist communities in developing strategies that supports businesses retain and create new jobs and opportunities

Contacts

1. Retail

Loblaws (Valu Mart)

<http://www.valumart.ca/LCLOnline/faqTermsConditions.jsp>

(905) 459-2500 ext. 3874

Subway

<http://www.subway.ca/en-CA/OwnAFranchise/ContactFranchiseSales/>

Mike Lopez (705) 286-3636

2. Tourism

2-A Marketing

Explorers Edge

<http://explorersedge.ca/>

James Murphy

james@explorersedge.ca

(800) 835-7303 Ext. 100

2-B Retail Operators

Algonquin Outfitters

Rich Swift 1-800-469-4948

<http://algonquinoutfitters.com/>

Canoe Algonquin

<http://canoealgonquin.com>

(705) 636-5956

Basecamp

<http://algonquinbasecamp.ca/>

Shop – (705) 636-0003

Mobile – (705) 783-2005

Email – info@algonquinbasecamp.ca

3. Hospitality

3.1 HOTEL CHAINS

Westmont Hospitality Group Mississauga, Ontario, Canada owns and manages hotels. It was founded by the Mangalji family. It is one of the biggest hospitality management companies. It currently is managed by Majid Mangalji.

Westmont Hospitality Group

5090 Explorer Drive
Suite 700
Mississauga ON L4W 4T9
Canada
(905) 629-3400

<http://www.whg.com>

The company has strategic alliances with Intercontinental Hotels (as Holiday Inn), Choice Hotels (as Comfort Inn and Quality Inn), Hilton Hotels, Radisson Hotels, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and Starwood Hotels. In 1997 Westmont took over the Journey's End Corporation.

From the Westmont website, regarding DEVELOPMENT:

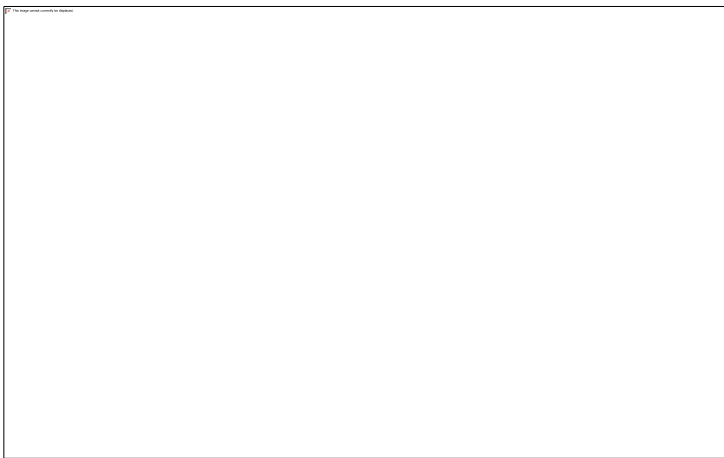
"Westmont has become one of the most active hotel investors worldwide and is continually monitoring hotel markets for potential investments. As a result of its current worldwide presence, Westmont has extensive market knowledge, excellent operational expertise and strong relationships with the world's largest hospitality lenders and advisors. This provides the company with a steady deal flow and a strong reputation in concluding both actively-marketed deals and off-market negotiated transactions.

The company will invest in an asset when it believes value can be created. Value creation is normally achieved by a combination of factors involving rebranding of the hotel, repositioning the product through capital expenditure and by improving the management and profitability. Although Westmont has franchise relationships with most major hotel brands, due to its impartiality, it is able to objectively determine the most appropriate brand for the situation that presents itself.

Westmont has invested in various types of hotels including limited service, extended stay, mid-market, boutique and luxury hotels, as well as upscale resorts."

Wyndham Hotel Group <http://www.wyndhamworldwide.com/contact-us>

The Wyndham Hotel Group represents 17 hotel chains including Days Inn, Super 8, Travelodge, Knights Inn and Wyndham Garden, all of which are suitable for smaller locations. As well, the Group represents larger hotel chains. Given South Almaguin's entry locations on Highway #11, with 11,000 vehicles traveling through daily, there is real opportunity for this chain to be interested in establishing a hotel/motel in the area.



4. Senior Housing and Care

- a. **Chartwell Retirement Living**
(905) 501-921
- b. **Gracious Retirement Living.** Properties in Orillia and Gravenhurst; Birchmere-on-the-Lake, Champlain Manor and Granite Ridge. Jackie Payne, Administrator, **Toll-Free:** 888-544-9124

5. Business Retention and Expansion Program

Contact: Carole Mantha, carole.mantha@ontario.ca
Ministry of Northern Development and Mines

6.0 GAP ANALYSIS

“The space between where we are and where we want to be.”

This gap analysis identifies the gap between where Burks Falls Armour and Ryerson actually are in terms of economic development against its potential.

CURRENT STATE: Throughout this report, we have listed the details of Burks Falls Armour and Ryerson’s current state, as indicated by the economic and demographic data and interview results we have collected and analyzed.

DESIRED FUTURE STATE: This next section defines a “desired state”, which addresses both the evident potential and the ‘wish list’ for a more prosperous South Almaguin Highlands. The data we have collected and studied, and the interviews we have conducted point a clear indication of what the future could, and often should, look like. In very few instances however, a clear concept of where Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson want and need to be is less evident: we have these as needing more discussion amongst the community’s decision makers.

GAPS: Between today’s economic reality, as evidenced in Section 4: Asset Inventory, and tomorrow’s strong and thriving South Almaguin Highlands, lays a series of gaps. The gaps are sector-specific, and when considered individually, some might appear to be “on the sidelines” of the hard, economic issues that make a community investment-ready, or not. When considered collectively, however, they paint a comprehensive picture of the community, its strengths and weaknesses. It is this comprehensive picture that businesses and investors look at when they decide whether or not to locate in a community: it is the total picture of infrastructure combined with workforce availability combined with quality of life that makes or breaks a community’s investment-readiness. Taken together, the following charts create that picture.

BRIDGING THE GAPS: We have prepared a series of recommendations, many of which address more than one gap; for example a recommendation regarding improved transportation has the potential to help with concerns about access to local shopping, getting students to and from post-secondary education sites, keeping seniors active in the local economy, and more.

Our recommendations appear in Section 2. Executive Summary.

GAP Analysis Burks Falls, Armour and Ryerson Townships

INFRASTRUCTURE #1 LOCATION, ROADS, STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION (ASSETS 4.3)	
Location on Hwy11	
CURRENT STATE	Enviably located with good visibility from Highway #11 between North and South exits to Burk's Falls. Very good exit ramps. New signage for Burk's Falls on northbound side. Inadequate signage to identify SAH as a cohesive area
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Highly visible, inviting entrances from all highway exits that lead into SAH, which will attract visitors. A "presence" for South Almaguin that is visible and makes the area identifiable from the highway.
GAPS	Attractive, directional signage before the south entrance and the north entrance of Burk's Falls, in both directions and 'Trailblazer Signage' leading from S. entrance onto Ontario St. A cohesive identity for the area

Ontario Street/ Downtown Image	
CURRENT STATE	Ontario Street B.F. has some attractive heritage buildings. Some need repair and restoration. Many empty buildings in need of repair or refurbishing. Street lights serve function, but appearance is utilitarian/industrial. The tourist information/community information area/kiosk in the municipal parking lot is not located in a prime visibility area, or being used to best advantage. Well signed, attractive, easy to read and up-to-date information about the community displayed in a prime location on main street. Ideally, a combination of print and touch-screen electronic information. Interactive map of village and surrounding area.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	A visually attractive Main Street with restored heritage buildings, attractive store-fronts and inviting businesses that encourage "walkability". A recognizable SAH "look and feel" to the most visible parts of the village of B.F., especially the main street.
GAPS	A financial incentive program or Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to restore heritage buildings or repair/upgrade occupied storefronts. Attractive, easy to find, easy to read, current visitors and residents information about the area posted in the downtown core. Existing info board could be used to better advantage. Need an easy method of keeping info up-to-the-minute

	Transportation (Taxi Service)
CURRENT STATE	There is no locally operated taxi service in Burks falls Armour and Ryerson Townships
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	A reliable taxi service for those who do not have access to an automobile to get to medical appointments, shopping etc.
GAPS	There seems to be an investment opportunity although the reasons for no taxi service in the area would require further investigation.

INFRASTRUCTURE #1 LOCATION, ROADS, STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION (ASSETS 4.3) Continued	
Sidewalks	
CURRENT STATE	Foot traffic in Armour commercial section walks on edge of road. Potential danger to pedestrians, and hazard for drivers.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Sidewalks on both sides of Ontario Street and Commercial Drive
GAPS	Sidewalks in Armour commercial section

INFRASTRUCTURE #2 PUBLIC UTILITIES (ASSET 4.9)	
Water and Sewers	
CURRENT STATE	Burk's Falls is the only municipality between Huntsville and Powassan with municipally provided water and sewers.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Abundant water supply and up-to-date sewer system Plentiful water supply
GAPS	Water and sewer expansion plans to supply the present and future growth

Telecommunications	
CURRENT STATE	DSL is available through various providers in the village. Limited access to tower-based providers in Armour and Ryerson. Satellite high speed Internet is available anywhere in Burks Falls Armour and Ryerson up to 10 mbps.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Access to fibre optic cable. *Note: Lakeland Networks announced (Feb 20) a new initiative to provide access to fibre by April 2014.
GAPS	Fibre exists along the Hwy #11. Need connection at Burk's Falls.

	LABOUR MARKET, EDUCATION, POPULATION, WAGES AND WORKFORCE TRENDS (Assets 4.2, 4.5)
	Access to Post-Secondary Education
CURRENT STATE	Absence of easy access to colleges and universities creates a need to travel outside this area (to Bracebridge or North Bay) for closest post-secondary education and trades training opportunities. Local manufacturing employers cannot find/retain skilled workers even though 12% of BAR's workforce holds trades certificates, compared to provincial average of 8%.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Easier access to post-secondary education: A community college presence (mini-satellite campus) and better access to Broadband Internet for online courses.
GAPS	Apprenticeship programs with local manufacturers. Local access to training in the trades and customer service

	SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTHCARE AND WELLNESS (ASSETS 4.7, 4.8)
	Primary Healthcare and Emergency Care
CURRENT STATE	Excellent primary care including physicians, nurse practitioner, RNs, lab, mental health counselor and allied health workers. Four physicians in Burk's Falls serve the community: favourable comparison to the provincial average for communities this size.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Full range of health services including emergency care
GAPS	Urgent/emergency care. It is a 35 minute drive from downtown Burk's Falls to the nearest Emergency Department. Much longer for residents in outlying areas. Urgent care is not in the mandate of the Burks Falls Family Health Team

	SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTHCARE AND WELLNESS (ASSETS 4.7, 4.8) Continued
	Social Services
CURRENT STATE	Fully occupied geared to income units
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Shorter wait times for social housing. More units available
GAPS	Low income housing in short supply. More geared to income units.

	Ageing Population
CURRENT STATE	Between 28% and 34% of the population is over the age of 60, making this area one of the few in Ontario with such a high percentage of seniors. As they age, they often move from the “active senior” category to “frail elderly
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	A full range of appropriate care facilities that enables our frail seniors and persons with disabilities to stay in their own community. Spin-off benefit is creation of jobs in care sector and support sectors.
GAPS	Long-term care facility. Seniors.’ assisted living units

TOURISM AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES (ASSET4.4, 4.10)	
Identification with Algonquin Park	
CURRENT STATE	Superb natural beauty and access to many lakes and forested areas. Location is doorstep to Algonquin Park
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Widespread recognition of SAH as Doorstep to Algonquin Park
GAPS	Promotion of road access to Algonquin Park's western entrance via Burk's Falls, and river access

Overnight Accommodations	
CURRENT STATE	No hotel, only one B and B, which is advertised only on web via Air B&B.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	Hotel or motel visible from highway or in downtown. Return of Hotel Central to use as a hotel
GAPS	Overnight accommodation for tourists, out-of-town workers, event participants

Identity as a Tourism Region	
CURRENT STATE	The area is named Almaguin Highlands.
DESIRED FUTURE STATE	An identity that is memorable and meaningful, such as "The Villages of Almaguin"
GAPS	Easy to identify name; Current name is hard to remember or spell, and does not describe the area's key attribute: its unique villages