



Staff Report

Report Title: 2022 EDCO Conference

Prepared By: Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives

Department: BED

Date: Feb. 21, 2023

Report Number: BED-2023-02-13

File Number:

Attachments: EDCO Awards Ceremony Photos

Recommendation:

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Council hereby approves for information report number BED-2023-02-13, prepared by Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives.

Background:

Amy Irwin, Business and Economic Officer and I attended the 2022 EDCO Conference from February 7th-10th, 2023 in Toronto. This report provides Council with an update from the conference.

Discussion:

First and foremost, I would like to give a huge congratulations to the Economic Development Team: Mary Rose Walden, Amy Irwin, Lauren Eby and Kristin Dimmick; for all their hard work and accomplishments in 2022! The work they did and continue to do, does not go unnoticed and I'm happy to report their achievements were celebrated at EDCO 2022 by winning the Rural Excellence Award. See the attached photo of Amy and Michelle accepting the award on behalf of the Township.

We also wanted to provide Council with a brief overview and some highlights from the conference.

The theme of the conference was "Time for TransformatiON," the seminars and keynote speakers really intertwined the theme into their content. The conference started off with Keynote Speaker Hamza Khan, he spoke about the future of work and how we need to redefine the "who, when, where, and how" of our work. Whether we want to admit it or not, the expectations of employees and the

motivations of employees are changing and if organizations don't adapt to that change they will fail. He summed up the reason why organizations fail quite easily: they fail when the rate of change inside an organization is slower than the rate of change outside an organization. And that people are no longer leaving organizations because of pay, they are leaving because organizations are not adapting to the "new world" or the post pandemic world.

This was a brilliant way to start off the conference and open our minds to new possibilities and partnerships.

Our key highlights and takeaways from the conference include:

- The values of your organization are defined by what you reward, tolerate and punish – at all levels of staff. This will also dictate your corporate culture.
- Housing is a multi-stakeholder problem and economic development professionals should be included in the conversation because our super power is to bring people together and create communities that are ready and excited for change. A housing readiness framework was also provided to attendees to assess where your community is at with housing affordability.
- EV Chargers was a big topic of conversation, one community in North Bay is using excess heat from their arena to power solar panels that charge their EV charging stations. The amount of energy they can store from the arena/solar panels can power their town for 24 hours.
- Investment Readiness was another theme throughout the week, we heard about the successes and challenges many of our peers faced when developing their business parks including:
 - You must have an investment strategy to define who you want in your park and criteria to say no. Once a development happens in your park you can't get rid of it.
 - Clusters are a huge asset, some parks are looking at life sciences or energy; figure out a cluster that will work in your area and target those businesses.
 - Clearly define your strengths and weaknesses; distance to transportation hubs (rail, ports, major highways), labour force and education/experience, housing – where their employees will live, etc. This should be included in your investment strategy.
 - Don't waste time chasing leads or investments that you can't support.
 - Do your due diligence; investors want shovels in the ground within 6 months, they want to know if they can scale-up (water, hydro, etc.), they want zoning ready, studies completed, etc.
 - M1 zoning is the best and easiest to sell
 - Just because land is available doesn't mean it should be developed, you have to look at the site specifically, using your investment strategy and answer the tough questions about whether it's a suitable place for a business park.

- We learned about a number of products at the tradeshow that could be explored to help us make decisions, understand our community and find efficiencies. Tools like mapping with MLS data to keep our available properties up to date, community profiles to help us understand who is living in and visiting Huron-Kinloss and what their needs/wants are, and other partners that can assist in linking us with grant opportunities and provincial programs.
- How to measure the success of our department was also discussed. Examples of tools our peers use to help track KPIs and report back on what we are doing and how we are impacting the community was touched on quite a bit. Also, the need to “make noise” and celebrate our accomplishments because economic development can often be thought of as a “nice-to-have” department but in reality we impact every area of what makes a community a great place to live, work and play (even though we are often working behind the scenes).
- Finally, one key takeaway that was articulated many times throughout the conference was the need for collaboration and the reduction of silos within our organizations and beyond. The most successful organizations were the ones that worked in partnership with their building and planning and public works departments; that looped the economic development team into projects at the outset and understood how economic development impacts all areas of their municipalities.

Probably the most invaluable part of the conference was the networking and relationship building. We met many other economic development professionals that were willing to share their successes, stories, challenges and project ideas. Many of these conversations sparked new ideas, things we could try in Huron-Kinloss, and potential solutions to some of our own challenges.

The conference was well worth attending and we hope to go back again next year!

Financial Impacts:

None at this time.

Strategic Alignment / Link:

The information provided in this report is consistent with and in keeping with the Municipality’s Vision & Mission. The recommendations contribute to the goals in achieving a prosperous, spirited, vibrant and accessible community.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives

Report Approved By:

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer