



## Staff Report

**Report Title: 2022 Year in Review and Economic Development Action Plan Review**

**Prepared By: Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives**

**Department: BED**

**Date: Jan. 16, 2023**

**Report Number: BED-2023-01-5**

**File Number:**

**C11 BED 23**

**Attachments: Economic Development Action Plan**

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### **Recommendation:**

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information report number BED-2023-01-5, prepared by Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives.

### **Background:**

In 2019, our team created an economic development action plan (attached) to strategically identify where our resources should be spent to get the best return on investment. We streamlined our work into four main goal areas: attract residents, energize downtowns, increase business and increase visitors. The action plan was a 36 month plan expiring in 2022. Although the pandemic altered some of our timelines, the team continued to persevere and completed much of the work identified in the plan. This report provides an update of our progress and a review of the accomplishments the CAO/Economic Development Department achieved over the last 3 years.

### **Discussion:**

When we developed our economic development action plan we had clear goals in mind; to figure out the best ways to spend our people power, money and expertise, to provide the greatest return on investment for the Township. The economic development action plan was identified as a key action item in our strategic plan action plan update for 2019-2023 and it was the first project we completed after the adoption of the strategic plan action plan update.

The Economic Development Action Plan includes 4 goal areas and 26 action items. In 2022, we continued to support the goals and objectives in the Economic

Development Action Plan. The team will be reviewing and updating our action plan for the next 3 years in 2023.

### **Goal Area #1: Attract Residents**

The objectives of this goal include:

- Develop a clear rationale for why newcomers should choose one of the Huron-Kinloss communities in which to live
- Create a marketing and promotional plan to attract new residents, particularly focused on the incoming workforce for the Bruce Power MCR project.
- New housing capacity: actions to stimulate an increase in the supply of attainable, quality housing for workers at all income levels

We achieved these objectives through the following:

- Supported the construction of 2 new subdivisions, a 10 lot development & an old subdivision being developed with 2 additional subdivisions in the works
- Created a resident attraction strategy with a goal of increasing our population by 10% over the next 5 years (2025). Updated our website to reflect our new brand "Live Simply, Simply Live" and our brand script.
- Created a resident attraction package that was distributed through local Realtors and promoted on social media.
- Created a resident attraction video that was promoted on social media
- Worked with Developer's to create efficiencies in their subdivision planning wherever possible (ie. The CAO scheduled meetings with Developer's, utility providers, senior staff, and engineers, to get all parties on the same page before developments began).
- Worked in partnership with Bruce County on their Official Plan and to understand Bill 23 and how we can support the development of attainable housing in Huron-Kinloss.
- Encourage Developer's to build rental units, multi-unit housing options. Explore partnerships with Habitat for Humanity to build attainable homes in Huron-Kinloss.
- Engaged partners to review workforce development needs in our area and developed successful Women in Carpentry program with Fanshawe College, UBC Local 2222 and VPI.

### **Goal Area #2: Energize Downtowns**

The objectives of this goal include:

- Accelerate programs to rejuvenate the main street environments in Ripley and Lucknow
- Select and implement tax and building code measures to incentivize landlords and other property owners to develop and maintain their buildings
- Recruit street front businesses that complement existing retail and commercial businesses

- Selectively facilitate program to support existing businesses (Holiday Shopping Pass)

We achieved these objectives by:

- Developed the Building Improvement grant and provided \$40,000 in funding to update commercial buildings in Ripley and Lucknow
- In partnership with Bruce County, the vacancy tax rebate was cancelled
- Renewed investment in Downtown Improvement Program (\$100,000 over 4 years) and continued partnership with Bruce County and their Spruce the Bruce Program
- Continued support for Lucknow & District Chamber of Commerce and Ripley Business Community on their beautification efforts for our downtowns.
- Supported new downtown businesses in both Ripley and Lucknow and home based businesses throughout the Township.

### Goal Area #3: Increase Business

The objectives of this goal area include:

- Help entrepreneurs envision, start and grow new enterprises
- Develop a programme to attract contractors and suppliers who need a presence in Bruce County
- Develop a business incubator to act as a hub for business support activities in the Township
- Build on the Township's business and agri-food strengths
- The successful realization and marketing of the industrial park and other properties

We achieved these objectives by:

- Developed business recruitment marketing materials and brand script, including welcome package for new businesses.
- Streamlined application process for Downtown Improvement Grants
- Constructed the Ripley Industrial Park, acceptance to Ontario Certified Site Program and the sale of 3 acres (15 net developable acres remain)
- Worked with MDB Insights to develop a list of best practices to further our goals on business recruitment and retention (to compliment economic development action plan)
- Successfully operated the Hub, our business incubator in Downtown Ripley – supported businesses with one-on-one support, training and networking events
- Developed a new youth entrepreneurship program – Sprout, and graduated our first participants through the program.
- Developed Homestead, a new program for home-based businesses to test a retail location
- Continued the Holiday Shopping Pass and the Discovery Guide

- Created job fairs, Explore HK and other promotions to stimulate workforce development and consumer attraction
- Successfully facilitated "Celebrate Success" business retention marketing campaigns throughout 2022 and ended the year with a business networking event "Sweet Success."
- Maintained resources for businesses affected by the pandemic and supported businesses with identifying funding opportunities or opportunities to pivot their business online through the Digital Main Street program.

#### Goal Area #4: Increase Visitors

The objectives of this goal area include:

- Maintain, rather than grow programming effort in tourism in the short-to-medium term

Our team realized the importance of focusing on business recruitment and retention in the early years of the economic development action plan. In 2021 and 2022, we identified the opportunity to review our current tourism initiatives after many of them were closed or paused due to the pandemic. We were able to complete our Tourism Action Plan which was adopted by Council in early 2022 and we achieved many of the action items in this plan this year:

- Revitalize Point Clark Lighthouse Museum
- Expand Secrets of the Back 40 to include cycling routes, itineraries, website and marketing assets
- Develop videos and images to support tourism initiatives

This report provides only a highlight of all the accomplishments our team has realized over the past 3 years, with many of the initiatives being completed in 2022. We proud of all the work our team has contributed to the prosperity of the Township and were elated to be selected as a finalist for the 2022 EDCO Rural Excellence Award.

#### **Financial Impacts:**

All projects were included in respective yearly budgets.

#### **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