



Staff Report

Report Title: Business and Economic Officer 2023 Year End Report

Prepared By: Amy Irwin

Department: BED

Date: Jan. 15, 2024

Report Number: BED-2024-01-2

File Number: C11

Attachments: None

Recommendation:

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report Number BED-2024-01-02, as prepared by Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer .

Background:

2023 Year End Report

Discussion:

2023 was another busy year for the Economic Development team with many projects completed.

Economic Development

- Support of Lucknow & District Chamber of Commerce and Ripley Business Community associations with attendance at meetings and regular updates.
- Business community was kept updated through regular Business Banner e-newsletters and posts on Do Business in Huron-Kinloss Facebook page.
- Distribution of the business survey via newsletter and email to local businesses, with the goal of curating data for an updated business directory and promotional/marketing material.
- Business networking/celebration event was hosted on November 23 at Pine River Mercato and Pizzeria.
- Business recognition program was implemented with 7 businesses being recognized in Huron-Kinloss for significant milestones.
- Support on the Lucknow's Music in the Fields committee meeting

- Presentations to 10 real estate developers at the EDCO and Ministry of Tourism Investment Dragons Den event in Toronto on October 5.
- Assistance with grant applications - Spruce the Bruce and Downtown Improvement Program grants were provided to Jane Nielson for façade improvement at 605 Campbell St., and the Bruce County Wine Seller at 75 Huron St. Ripley.
- Continued work on reviewing and revising Community Improvement Plan and grant programs.

Business Recruitment and Expansion

- Investors Day bus tour was well attended in May, highlighting current and potential opportunities for investors and Economic Development team received a lot of positive feedback from attendees.
- Staff are working with a graphic designer to create a business recruitment pitch kit, to attract businesses to Huron-Kinloss. To be rolled out in Spring 2024.
- Huron-Kinloss welcomed the opening of Hands on Healing in downtown Lucknow and Collective Co. Boutique in downtown Ripley. We said goodbye to Royer's Department Store and the Hub in Ripley. Currently there are 4 move-in ready commercial storefronts in Ripley and 1 in Lucknow.

Successful grant applications

- Support was provided to Lucknow's Music in the Fields by assisting with a Celebrate Ontario grant application, resulting in \$72,500 in funding.
- Summer Experience Program grant for Point Clark Lighthouse Coordinator and Lucknow Tourism student with \$3812 for wages.
- \$2000 from Bruce Power for the Children's Program at the Point Clark Lighthouse

Tourism

Secrets of the Back Forty 2023

Secrets of the Back Forty, Huron-Kinloss' new tourism website was launched in June with the goal of the first year of the initiative to educate locals and businesses about the initiative and start building brand recognition. This was accomplished through:

- Regular social media promotion on Huron-Kinloss Tourism
- Branded flags put at key locations – Pine River Cheese, Grassroots Wood Fired Pizza, Bruce Botanical Gardens, Point Clark Lighthouse, Farrell's Pick your Own and Lucknow Tourism office
- Branded sandwich boards at Holyrood General Store, Point Clark Lighthouse, Lucknow Tourism office and Pine River Cheese
- Staff attendance at 3 Drifter's Cruise Nights and the Ripley Food Art and Craft Festival to hand out postcards with QR code to Secrets of the Back Forty
- Branded postcards put in every camper bag at Lucknow's Music in the Fields and for pick up at various Township events (Food, Art and Craft Festival, Fall Fairs, etc.)

- Postcards for pick up at Fisherman's Cove, Lucknow Tourism Office, Point Clark Lighthouse and Grassroots Wood fired Pizza
- Launch event held on July 23 at Grassroots Wood fired pizza with approximately 150 people attending. Postcards were handed out to all attendees with explanation of initiative
- Paid display ad in Kincardine Tourist Guide, Grey-Bruce Escape and a 2-page spread in Huron-Kinloss Discovery Guide
- Social media Influencer (organized by County of Bruce)
- Charity cycling for pancreatic cancer made a detour to include some of the Back Forty route
- Photo shoot in September to update website and print assets for next year
- Integrated the online booking system for Point Clark Lighthouse within the page, resulting in 337 tickets sold online.
- Website views of www.secretsofthebackforty: 8099 page views thus far in 2023, with 2432 unique users.
- Organized and purchased Secrets of the Back Forty magnets and reusable bags for promotions.

The goal of promotion this year was accomplished by introducing the brand and concept and creating awareness with the operators and local business owners, in addition to a soft launch to the public. The closure of the bridge on one of the cycling routes prevented a lot of promotion of the cycling routes this year. We also wanted to get a baseline of website views so we can compare year over year and solicit feedback to enhance the site for robust promotion next year.

Point Clark Lighthouse

The Point Clark Lighthouse Museum saw a successful renovation in the spring with new lighting, flooring, electrical, furniture and creations and installation of display panels and exhibits. The fundraising campaign closed out this fall with \$66,590 in donations, exceeding our target and allowing for ongoing upgrades and exhibit enhancements.

- The Lighthouse Grand Re-opening event was held on June 15 with approximately 40 in attendance and reopened on June 30 for tours, the first time since being closed since 2019.
- Four staff and four staff and one coordinator were hired to conduct daily tours, organize a weekly children's program every Friday afternoon, and host special events such as a Lighthouse speaker series, National Lighthouse Day and a Paint Night.
- 2702 people paid for a tour in 2023. 88 children attended 7 children's programs and 58 people attended 3 of the Lighthouse speaker series. 150-200 people attended National Lighthouse day and 19 people attended the Paint Night.
- Merchandise sold very well.
- Digital enhancements made this year include the addition of a 3D digital tour of the tower and museum, available for those looking for an alternative way to experience a tour, online booking system for tours, Square POS system for merchandise and online waiver forms.

- Collaboration with other small museums in Bruce County on the creation of a Museum Road Trip brochure, to be distributed in 2024.

General Tourism

- Drifter's Car Club has hosted 3 Cruise nights at the Ripley-Huron Community Centre - June 30, August 4 and September 1. Tourism and Economic Development support was given by procuring local food vendors and some marketing leading up to and during the event.
- Lucknow Tourism office was open 30 hours a week this summer and staff promoted Secrets of the Back Forty, worked with the Lucknow Chamber on shop local initiatives, ran the Huron-Kinloss Tourism social media accounts, planned the Back Forty launch, assisted with other tourism events in the community and welcomed visitors in the office.
- 7000 copies of the Huron-Kinloss Discovery Guide was printed and distributed to every resident and to Tourism Information Centres throughout Ontario.

Ripley and Lucknow Holiday Shopping Pass

The Holiday Shopping Pass ran from Nov. 12 – Dec. 24/23 with 29 businesses participating. Customers receive one sticker for every \$10 spend at these businesses and once a card is filled with \$150 worth of stickers, it can be entered to win \$150 in Huron-Kinloss dollars (1 of 3 grand prizes) and \$100 in Huron-Kinloss dollars (1 of 2 early bird prizes).

Completed passes are being collected and tallied and a full report will be included in the February COW report.

We are looking forward to a prosperous 2024 and are excited to see what new opportunities the Secrets of the Back Forty initiative and business recruitment efforts will bring to our municipality.

Financial Impacts:

None

Strategic Alignment / Link:

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

Respectfully Submitted By:

Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer

Report Approved By:

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer