



## Staff Report

**Report Title: 2024 March Manager of Strategic Initiatives Status Update**

**Prepared By: Michelle Goetz**

**Department: BED**

**Date: Mar. 4, 2024**

**Report Number: BED-2024-03-6**

**File Number:**

**C11 BED 24**

**Attachments: DRAFT Community Improvement Plan Update**

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### **Recommendation:**

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report BED-2024-03-6, prepared by Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives;

AND FURTHER authorizes staff to submit an application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation capital grant program for the Lucknow Community Centre Roof Replacement Project.

### **Background:**

This report provides Council with an update from the Manager of Strategic Initiatives.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Women in Construction**

We will be wrapping up our Women in Construction Program at the end of March and with that I would like to extend my thanks to everyone that made the program such an amazing success.

Kristin Dimmick, Project Coordinator; Kristin was a joy to work with, she is the real reason this program was so successful. Her dedication and hard work have not gone unnoticed by me, the partners or the participants. She was always willing to give extra support and guidance to the women in the program and I'm sure she was the reason many stuck with it, even when they were faced with challenges.

Jason Wilson, Workforce Development Coordinator; even though his tenure with the Township was short, Jason opened many doors for women to get into the trades. The workshops he organized and the contacts he made with employers will have a lasting impression on the participants and on the industry itself. Jason was a great supporter of our program and the participants and a dedicated employee!

Heather Mackenzie-Card, Fanshawe; this program wouldn't have started without Heather contacting the Township and sharing her idea with us. It was three years ago last month that Heather first approached the Township for support in bringing her vision to life and I'm so proud of what we have accomplished together since then. Heather's team, Catherine MacKinnon and Kim Reid have also played vital roles in the success of this program and we appreciate everything they have done to support it.

Ryan Plante, UBC Local 2222, Ryan's unwavering support of the Women in Carpentry and Women in Construction programs will undoubtedly be a contributing factor to how the carpentry industry becomes more welcoming to women in the future.

Pierre Valley and Jeff Loney, Bruce County, Pierre and Jeff have seen the value in this program and what it can do to not only fill a labour shortage in our region, but also provide women with meaningful employment opportunities. They believe the program's work is not done and hope to continue building success through their own Skills Development Fund project, if their funding application is successful. We have committed to supporting them through the transition and hope to see many more opportunities for women in trades in the future.

VPI and the Adult Learning Centre, Grey-Bruce Habitat for Humanity, our local employers, and all participants; this program wouldn't have achieved the success it has without your commitment, support and dedication.

We will provide a full wrap-up report to Council at the May COW meeting.

### **Lucknow Community Centre**

The Ontario Trillium Foundation capital grant program has re-opened with a deadline to apply of March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. After many discussions with staff, the Lucknow Community Centre Board and the Trillium Foundation Representative, it was decided that the Township would apply to the capital grant on behalf of the Board. The Township has a proven track record of successfully managing large capital projects, something the grant committee looks for when a large funding request is made. We also determined with our Solicitor that the lease agreement requirements for Trillium (a separate agreement with the Kinsmen only, not the Board) is not ideal from a legal standpoint. Therefore, we will be submitting an application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation on behalf of the Lucknow Community Centre Board for the repair of the roof at the Community Centre. Mike Fair, Director of Community Services will liaise with the selected contractor and the Board to ensure the project is completed on

time and on budget. The total project cost is \$136,000, the Township will only be providing in-kind support, no financial commitment is required.

### **Rural Economic Development Fund – Ontario**

The Economic Development Team applied to the Rural Economic Development Fund through the Province of Ontario to leverage the Downtown Revitalization funding we received through the NWMO. We have applied for an additional \$32,500, bringing the project total to \$82,500, if successful. The goals of the Downtown Revitalization Project include:

- Community Engagement: work with the community to determine what businesses would be supported in Downtown Ripley
- Conduct a retail gap analysis
- Develop an action plan to revitalize the downtown
- Create a design rendering of the Downtown; will work with community groups and property owners to bring the design to life
- Facilitate community events and downtown promotions to increase consumer traffic and encourage entrepreneurs to open a business in Ripley
- Image and video development that can be used for downtown promotions and business recruitment
- Develop a targeted business recruitment marketing campaign
- Provide training and coaching to local business owners on how to increase consumer traffic and make the most of downtown events and promotions

The ultimate purpose of this project is fill the vacant tenant ready spaces in Downtown Ripley and encourage new commercial developments. Our hope is that when this project is completed we will have a business recruitment and downtown revitalization model that can be used in our other Huron-Kinloss communities.

This project is included in our Integrated Master Plan and is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

### **Homegrown: A Gathering for Female Rural Business Owners**

The Economic Development Team was approached by Launch It, the Town of Minto's Business Centre and Incubator, to partner on a business event being held at Grassroots in Lucknow. Launch It and the Town of Minto were big supporters and amazing partners of the Township when we went down the path of opening the Hub in Downtown Ripley.

Homegrown is described by the organizers as:

*"Creative Worth Branding & Design presents Homegrown: a first-of-its-kind one-day forum for female-identifying rural business owners in midwestern Ontario. Part pep rally, part summer camp, part business conference, Homegrown is about providing a*

*gathering opportunity for rural women entrepreneurs to hear the stories of other women business owners, fill their cup with support and encouragement, build personal and business connections, and celebrate the creativity and resiliency of rural businesses/living”*

With Grassroots as the venue we believe this is a great partnership opportunity for our team and aligns with our 2024 business recruitment and retention plans. We will be sending the event information to all our female owned businesses and some of our HK businesses are participating as panelists or speakers at the conference. We will provide \$1500 for the venue sponsorship package (from our business recruitment budget) and in turn we will be the event partner, participate as a panelist, and promote Huron-Kinloss as a great place to visit and do business while at the event.

### **2023-2033 Strategic Plan: Blueprint for our Future**

Staff is finalizing the new Council report templates that will include a more consistent method for staff to align their work to the strategic plan. We hope to have the new templates ready for the May COW meeting.

Our Integrated Master Plan has been uploaded into our tracking software, Envisio. Staff will receive end user training over the next few weeks and then the dashboard will be added to our corporate website. The dashboard will be added to the [Mission and Vision](#) webpage with the rest of the strategic plan content.

Staff attended performance measurement training on February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024 provided by Envisio. The training focused on creating KPIs that bring value to your department and using the data we already have available to track our progress. We are excited to put this training to good use as we move forward with implementation of our integrated master plan.

### **Ripley Food Art and Craft Festival**

Planning is well under way for the 2024 Ripley Food Art and Craft Festival. The event will take place on Saturday August 17<sup>th</sup> 2024 from 9AM-2PM at the Ripley-Huron Community Centre. We have opened vendor registration for last year's vendors, if they wish to return, and we will be opening up registration to the general public on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Digital Modernization**

We are continuing to work through some issues with our eCommerce provider, specifically some issues with reporting and reconciling payments that are made online. We are currently accepting online payments for some recreation programs and for golf car permit renewals. Once reporting is sorted, we hope to provide online payment options for additional items.

The Municipal Innovation Council Joint IT Services Committee has been reinstated. The purpose of this committee is to work collaboratively to find opportunities to:

- Improve customer experience
- Improve operational efficiencies and identify cost savings
- Build strategic relationships
- Create innovative solutions that have a significant positive impact

The Manager of Strategic Initiatives is a member of this committee.

We have renewed our See Click Fix licence for one more year until March 2025. We are actively pursuing other options to report a problem using our website or other software providers. See Click Fix is a great software tool but it is quite costly and US based. We hope to have an alternative option ready to launch prior to the 2025 renewal date.

You will notice some changes on our website in the coming weeks! Our parks and facilities listings and business directory are getting a facelift. The new listings will provide a more user friendly experience by bolstering the search function and providing a mapping feature. There is no cost for this update.

### **Community Improvement Plan Updates**

The Downtown Improvement Committee has been reviewing our Community Improvement Plan (CIP) over the last few months. Bruce County revised their Spruce the Bruce program, adding additional funding programs in 2022 and unfortunately, without updating our own CIP, our businesses are not eligible for those programs.

Through our discussions with the County and with our internal committee we revised the plan to include a new schedule that outlines all of the County's Spruce the Bruce programs.

When the County updated their programs in 2022 they separated their signage, façade, and awning grants into separate funding programs, in our draft update we have matched our programs with the County's to decrease any confusion about what is eligible for 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 funding. As Council is aware, we have a partnership with the County that allows our businesses to apply for Spruce the Bruce funding for signage and façade improvements that automatically accesses our downtown improvement program funding. Spruce the Bruce without this partnership is 50/50, Spruce the Bruce provides 50% funding and the applicant provides 50% funding. Through our partnership, Spruce the Bruce provides 1/3 funding, the Township provides 1/3 funding and the applicant provides 1/3 funding for successful applications in Huron-Kinloss.

In the draft update, we also added an additional community improvement plan area that encompasses the full municipality. Some of the new Spruce the Bruce programs are geared towards tourism and agricultural businesses outside of our downtowns

and current CIP areas. The agri-food innovation and product and experience development grants align perfectly with our Secrets of the Back 40 tourism strategy.

Finally, we added some programs to our downtown improvement program to allow us to provide 1/3 funding to applicants through the Spruce the Bruce program. The new programs being added to our downtown improvement program through the CIP include:

- Business Adaptability and Accessibility Grant
- Agri-Food Innovation Grant
- Product and Experience Development

Attached to this report is the draft updated Community Improvement Plan for you to review. We are required to send the draft to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for review before we bring the updated plan back to Council to be approved by By-Law. We must also host an open house to allow the public to comment on the updates. We will schedule the open house and bring forward the draft to Council again after the Ministry has reviewed it.

The procedure to administer the Downtown Improvement Program will remain the same, Council will approve the programs through the By-Law, the Downtown Improvement Committee will determine which programs to offer and the allotted funding amounts per program based on the current needs of our businesses.

**Financial Impacts:**

These projects and initiatives are included in the 2024 budget.

**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, environmentally conscious and accessible community.

**Respectfully Submitted By:**

Michelle Goetz, Manager of Strategic Initiatives

**Report Approved By:**

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer