



The Corporation of the Township of Huron-Kinloss

Staff Report

Report Title: Business and Economic Development 2024 Year End Report

Date: Jan. 13, 2025

Report Number: BED-2025-01

Department: CAO

File Number: C11 BED 25

Prepared By: Amy Irwin, Business and Economic Development Officer

Attachments: None

Recommendation:

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby receives for information Report Number BED-2025-01, as prepared by Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer

Background:

2024 Year End Report

Discussion/Analysis/Overview:

2024 was another busy year for the Economic Development team with a continued focus on economic development, business support and recruitment and tourism.

Economic Development

- Support of Lucknow & District Chamber of Commerce and Ripley Business Community associations with attendance at meetings and regular updates. Key activities accomplished with these organizations include: support with supervision of the Lucknow Tourism student, support to the Ripley Business Community in securing grants for downtown Christmas lighting and a new mural downtown.
- Business community was kept updated through regular e-mails and posts on Discover Huron-Kinloss Facebook page.
- Business recognition program was implemented with 3 businesses being formally recognized in Huron-Kinloss for significant milestones.
- Support on the Lucknow's Music in the Fields committee meetings continued, with the 2024 Festival being the most successful to date, with over 7500 weekend tickets sold.
- Assistance to businesses with Spruce the Bruce grant applications and Huron-Kinloss Downtown Improvement Program, proved to be a busy and successful year, supporting significant investments by our businesses.

Completed grants administered in 2024 include:

- o Acacia Fine Cabinetry, Ripley - Signage
- o Hands on Healing, Lucknow – Community Energy Efficiency
- o Mani and Mane, Lucknow – Community Energy Efficiency

- Green's Meat Market, Lucknow – Façade and signage; Business Accessibility and Adaptability
- Hodgins Home Hardware, Lucknow – Façade
- Hometown Custom Builder, Lucknow – Signage
- Grassroots Woodfired Pizza, Lucknow – Product and Experience Development
- Bruce Botanical Food Gardens Ripley - Product and Experience Development
- Stonebridge Flour, Ripley - Agri-Food Innovation

There are 3 additional outstanding grants approved in 2024, to be completed in 2025.

Business Recruitment and Expansion

- Business window clings, promoting downtown Ripley spaces were installed in July on available spaces downtown, enhancing the look of downtown while functioning as a business recruitment initiative.
- The Township welcomed 2 new businesses in downtown Lucknow in 2024 – Kings Pizza and Budzrus Lucknow; one in Ripley, the Thrive Network, one relocation in Point Clark with the opening of Her Strength Studio in the Point Clark Community Centre and the first business in the Ripley Industrial Park, Acacia Fine Cabinetry. Flame n Bricks Pizzeria in Lucknow and Shoreline Chic in Ripley closed. Currently there are 3 move-in ready commercial storefronts in Ripley and 2 in Lucknow.
- Support provided to the Homegrown Event, hosted at Grassroots in June, bringing together rural women entrepreneurs from 5 counties.

Successful grant applications

- Support was provided to Lucknow's Music in the Fields by assisting with a Celebrate Ontario grant application, resulting in \$125,000 in funding.
- Summer Experience Program grant for Lucknow Tourism student with \$3,816 for wages.
- \$2,000 from Bruce Power for the Children's Program at the Point Clark Lighthouse
- Rural Economic Development (RED) grant for downtown revitalization, \$32,000.

Downtown Ripley Revitalization

- A community engagement session was held in March at the Ripley-Huron Community Centre. 23 people were in attendance and provided ideas, thoughts and concerns about downtown revitalization. Out of this session, a RED grant was secured and staff engaged with a consultant on an envisioning exercise, with a draft currently being reviewed.
- Window boxes were built, installed and filled this summer on all downtown storefronts; in addition to the upgrades to Lewis Park pavilion, window clings on available spaces, downtown mural, summer programming in the park (Back Forty

Bazaar) and upgraded seasonal lighting; these improvements are a first step to bringing a cohesive look to the community and enhancing the downtown.

- Next steps in the project will be determined and brought forward in the coming months.

Tourism

Secrets of the Back Forty 2024

Secrets of the Back Forty continues to be promoted during our summer season 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, and Lucknow Tourism office
- Branded sandwich boards at Holyrood General Store, Point Clark Lighthouse, Lucknow Tourism office and Pine River Cheese
- Staff attendance at the Ripley Food Art and Craft Festival to hand out postcards with QR code to Secrets of the Back Forty
- Branded postcards dropped off at various tourism information centre 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
- 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)
- Ontario by Bike included the Point Clark Lighthouse and some of the Back Forty route as part of their fall tour, with over 25 cyclists participating.
- Ongoing yearlong photo assets are being secured for continued promotion.
- Back Forty Bazaar – a new market in the park, alternating between Lucknow and Ripley which saw 2 markets in Lucknow and 6 in Ripley. The last 3 markets in Lucknow were cancelled due to low vendor interest. The total attendance of visitors in Lucknow was 110 and in Ripley, 730. Live music was at most of the markets as well as food trucks and an average of 6-8 vendors. The event was successful in promoting Secrets of the Back Forty (with branded flags and sandwich boards out, promotional material available and social media and print advertising), as well as a venue to bring the community together. It was a challenge to secure enough vendors with the right insurance requirements to attend on a regular basis. Surveys were sent to all vendors and the feasibility of 2025 Back Forty Bazaar is yet to be determined.

Point Clark Lighthouse

The Point Clark Lighthouse opened on June 28 with a full complement of 5 seasonal staff.

- 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.

- 2308 people paid for a tour (1559 adults and 749 children), 69 children attended 7 children's programs, 74 people attended 4 Lighthouse Speaker Series, 19 people paid for the Paint Night and over 150 people were at the National Lighthouse Day. The number of guests paying for a tour was down 15% from 2023, children's program attendance was down 27%, speaker series attendance was up 27% and Paint Night and Lighthouse Day statistics remained the same.
- Merchandise sales were up 26% from 2023 and overall revenue up 11% from 2023.
- Collaborated with other small museums in Bruce County on the creation of a Museum Road Trip brochure and was available on site.

General Tourism

- 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, assisted with the Back Forty Bazaar and other tourism events in the community and welcomed visitors in the office.
- 7500 copies of the Huron-Kinloss Discovery Guide were printed and distributed to every resident and to Tourism Information Centres throughout Ontario.
- The inaugural Jack-o-Lantern Trail was initiated in partnership with Public Works staff, Community Services staff, Communications Coordinator and the Bruce Botanical Food Garden (BBFG). Held on Nov. 1, public were invited to drop off jack-o-lanterns at 3 drop off locations. 116 Jack-o-lanterns were set up at the BBFG and lit at night, creating a trail. Over 90 people attended this first community event, with much positive feedback. This community event benefited a local not-for-profit (BBFG), bringing awareness to this organization, created a fun, low-cost community event and saved pumpkins from the landfill. Mayor Murray graciously picked up the pumpkins the next day for livestock feeding. It is anticipated this will become an annual event.

Ripley and Lucknow Holiday Shopping Pass

The annual Holiday Shopping Pass ran from Nov. 12 – Dec. 24/24 with 27 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 2025 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:

All projects included in this report are included in the 2024 Economic Development Budget and future projects to be considered with 2025 budget deliberations.

Performance Measurement:

Increase in businesses opening in the Township.

Downtown Revitalization efforts in Ripley realized through completion of action items, funded by RED grant.

Increase in visitors to our communities as measured by Point Clark Lighthouse statistics.

Increase in awareness of programs, services, business and tourism through annual publication and distribution of the Discovery Guide.

Number of applications received for Downtown Improvement grant program.

Local spending as recorded through the Holiday Shopping Pass program.

Strategic Area:

- Embrace a thriving rural lifestyle
- Enhance Municipal Service Delivery
- Prepare for Inclusive Growth
- Ensure Financial Stability

Strategic Goal: Encourage economic vitality

Respectfully Submitted By:

Amy Irwin, Economic Development Officer

Report Approved By:

Jodi MacArthur, Chief Administrative Officer