

Report to Council

Report Title: Community Development Coordinator Update – March 2022

Prepared By: Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator

Department: Economic Development

Date: March 8, 2022

Report Number: ED2022-01 **File Number:** C11ED

Attachments: Saugeen Connects Quarterly Report,
Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus Report,
Women’s Day and AWE poster,
Digital Main Street Webinars,
Brockton Business Newsletter

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton receives Report Number ED2022-01 - Community Development Coordinator Update – March 2022, prepared by Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator, for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

The Community Development Coordinator (CDC) submits regular reports to Council to keep it abreast of activities related to community and economic development. The following initiatives have been key priorities over the past few months:

- Assisting with the Municipal Budget
- New Community Improvement Plan
- New Brockton Residents Guide
- SEDC and Saugeen Connects/RAC Projects
- East Ridge Business Park
- Business Newsletters
- Brockton Dollars
- Development Inquiries
- Business Recognitions
- Market Garden Project
- Digital Main Street
- Visitor Services
- Input for new Banners for Chepstow

Analysis:

Residents Guide

The Municipality has published a new guide, called "[Welcome to Brockton: A Resource Guide for Residents.](#)" It's designed to meet the needs of new residents, people interested in the community, and long-time residents as well, with information about a wide range of municipal services, community groups, activities, demographic information, helpful links and ways to get involved and stay in touch. Designed and printed locally, there are 3,000 copies available, and we have already begun distributing to local realtors, businesses and community groups. The guide is also available online, on the Municipal website, and will be promoted through social media and advertising.

Business Outreach

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact our ability to meet with businesses one-on-one, and we are very pleased restrictions are lifting, enabling us to reach out to businesses in earnest in March and April. Recent business recognitions have included the Walkerton Herald Times, celebrating 160 years, Weiler's Cleaning & Restoration (35 years), and new business L.R. Eggleton Accounting and Tax Services.

Later this month we will be celebrating the new ownership of Simply Deli-cious and Luxus Dékor, plus a new location (and expansion) for the Littles & Co. children's store.

Staff have directly assisted businesses looking for help navigating COVID-19 supports, housing, and in one instance, a Ukraine employee with family back home.

We continue to receive inquiries about land in the East Ridge Business Park and available properties in Brockton, for both industrial and residential development. The CDC has followed up on eight such inquiries since the last CDC Update.

The CDC also responded to an Expression of Interest from the provincial government for land for a science complex, with a proposal for the East Ridge Business Park.

Communications and Marketing

The CDC has issued five Brockton Business Newsletters since the last update, with news about COVID-19 supports for businesses, Brockton Dollars, Digital Main Street and more. The most recent newsletter is attached to this report. Others can be found at Brockton.ca/businessnewsletter.

Staff assisted with an article about Brockton economic development for the 2022 Business Outlook magazine published by the Sun Times. We continue to post business-related updates through Brockton's social media channels as well.

Digital Main Street

Our partnership in the Digital Main Street program, which has enabled us to share digital specialist Brooke Hagan with the Municipality of South Bruce, has produced some very positive results! Brooke has reached out to over 40 Brockton businesses, and assisted 22 with their digital marketing needs, including online shopping, website creation, improving social media, and making the most of free Google listings. She also delivered a

successful online webinar series to help demystify social media tools for businesses (see attached poster). There were eight webinars altogether (six plus another two added by popular demand), and most had over 20 people attending.

The webinars and private consultations have been free of charge to business owners. The timing has been excellent, as bricks-and-mortar businesses struggle to navigate e-commerce and the ever-changing world digital marketing (the new “Metaverse”) in the era of COVID-19.

Brooke’s contact ends March 30th. Her position was funded through a grant of \$92,500 from Digital Main Street’s Ontario Grants Program, which enabled seven participating municipalities in Bruce County to hire four digital specialists to assist businesses. This has been well worth our effort!

Market Garden Project

The CDC has applied for funding for the Market Garden Project from the My Main Street Activator Program. If successful, it could contribute up to \$54,000 towards the project’s capital costs.

A presentation was also made to the Walkerton Rotary Club, outlining the park’s vision and funding opportunities. We are finalizing the Wong family heritage plaque that is an integral part of the park’s design.

Tourism

Staff have interviewed candidates for the Visitor Services Summer Student position and expect the job to be filled soon. We have applied for grant funding to support the student. The position will work from the Lobies Park Campground, assisting with visitor services, campground registration and park duties, social media, photography, some business outreach and surveys.

We are planning to create new Brockton and Walkerton maps this year, along with dining and shopping guides. New Bruce County guides will be available through a “print on demand” format.

We are also involved in a new Saugeen River Collective with three other municipalities (Hanover, Arran-Elderslie and Saugeen Shores) to help create a co-ordinated approach to enhancement and development of activities on the Saugeen River, from maintenance to promotion. We have met with a broad range of stakeholders, including the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority, Bruce County, Grey County, RTO7, fishing groups, paddling groups, the Saugeen Artists Guild, outfitters, and more. Brockton’s CDC, Director of Parks and Recreation, and GIS Coordinator also attended the meetings. Of particular interest: Lobies Park is one of the busiest and best boat launches on the Saugeen River, according to Thorncrest Outfitters. Municipal economic development staff involved in the project have also met with their counterparts on the Grand River, to learn best practises. We are developing a business plan and will report back to Council in the near future.

Saugeen Economic Development Corp. (SEDC) and Workforce Initiatives

The Municipality of Brockton is involved with SEDC (our local Community Futures office) through its regional advisory committee of 10 municipalities, and the smaller Saugeen Connects group, which meets monthly.

Through Saugeen Connects, we are hosting a keynote speaker and panel for International Women’s Day March 8th, featuring Amanda Mayhew of Just Hunt Inc., addressing barriers facing women in business. One of

our four panelists will be Sarah Rodenhiser of Rural Strength and Conditioning in Walkerton, who has pivoted her business during COVID-19 and is now looking to expand.

We are also launching our second annual AWE (Advancing Women Economically) series for female entrepreneurs, offering free training in finance, business planning, marketing, and more. More information is on the attached poster. Attendees may receive up to \$500 upon completion to assist their business.

Saugeen Connects members are finalizing this year's Saugeen Student Start-up Program (SSUP) for young entrepreneurs. Lastly, we enlisting local employers interested in hiring newcomers, for a new feature on the Saugeen Connects website.

The Regional Advisory Committee of SEDC is currently preparing an application to the Rural Economic Development fund of OMAFRA for a workforce pilot project that would help fill opportunities with local employers using locally trained people facing barriers to employment. The aim is to bridge the gap between the hard-to-fill positions being left vacant and our available workforce, already living in our community and working with service providers to upgrade their skills.

Meantime, the Grey-Bruce Local Immigration Partnership is planning training for employers in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace, scheduled for April.

Bruce County is also applying for RED funding for workforce attraction and retention initiatives, which Brockton is supporting. Housing and labour force issues are emerging as key priorities in our region for 2022. These were also echoed in a recent report from the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus on Workforce Development, which is attached.

Joint efforts on these large initiatives is the only way to achieve effective results.

The Four County Labour Market Planning Board is presenting a report on the Local Labour Market Plan for 2022 on March 10th at 2:15 p.m., through Zoom.

It presented four other reports earlier in the year: Business Counts in The Four County Region; Does Remote Work Have a Future in the Four Country Region?; Precarious Living Series; and Covid-19 Impact on Women. Visit planningboard.ca/reports for the full documents.

Brockton Dollars

Our Brockton Dollars program officially launched in January and more than 40 business have signed up. Information is available on our [Brockton Dollars web page](#), including sign-up forms and a list of participating businesses. Many are taking advantage of the option of electronic payments when they redeem the gift certificates, meaning no more waiting for cheques in the mail!

Community Improvement Plan

Work is continuing on our Community Improvement Plan, in concert with the county's amended Spruce the Bruce program. Staff have met with the county's planning department, and are working to have a public meeting to approve the CIP in April.

The CDC remains involved with new business inquiries, marketing initiatives, the Market Garden Park sub-committee, the Walkerton BIA, Saugeen Connects and the SEDC Regional Advisory Group, the Grey-Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP) – Employer Subcommittee, Bruce County Economic Development initiatives and feedback groups, Brockton’s Municipal Emergency Control Group, the NII’s Clean Energy Frontier (attending the summit in December), participating in the development of the County of Bruce Housing toolkit and the Digital Main Street initiative.

Strategic Action Plan Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Strategic Action Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?		
• Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision		Yes
• Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community		Yes
• Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life		N/A
• Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment		N/A
• Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development		Yes
• Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance		N/A

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective?
N/A

There are no financial implications to the items in this report outside of the approved budget.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer