

Report to Council

Report Title: Economic Development Update – March 2026

Prepared By: Christine Brandt, Community Development Coordinator

Department: Economic Development

Date: March 24, 2026

Report Number: ED2026-04

File Number: C11ED

Attachments:

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number ED2026-04 - Economic Development Update – March 2026, prepared by Christine Brandt, Community Development Coordinator for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

The Community Development Coordinator (CDC) provides regular updates to Brockton Council to inform on activities relating to community and economic development. This report specifically touches on the following:

- East Ridge Business Park
- Spruce the Bruce Grants
- CIP business Grants
- Business Recognitions
- Coffee With the Mayor
- International Plowing Match
- Saugeen Connects
- Clean Energy Frontier
- Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership
- Tourism Updates

Analysis:

East Ridge Business Park

Brockton, along with several newer developments in the East Ridge Business Park, was featured in the [Fall 2025 edition of Business View Magazine](#) as part of a broader interview with Mayor Chris Peabody and CAO

Sonya Watson highlighting the municipality's economic development initiatives. The feature was shared on municipal social media channels, and a copy is available for viewing in the lobby of the municipal office.

Over the winter, permits for a second pylon sign were approved by both the County and the Municipality to help promote businesses located in the southern area of the park. The foundation for the sign will be poured once weather conditions allow.

Several sites within the park are currently under construction or being prepared for development, including the second WT Living apartment building, LiUNA Local 1059's training facility, the new location of Price-Schonstrom, and a gas bar and fast-food restaurant.

Spruce the Bruce Grants

Brockton's Economic Development Department has successfully secured five Spruce the Bruce grants for various projects and initiatives. In 2026 this funding will assist with:

- New holiday lighting displays for Cargill
- Updated garbage receptacles for downtown Walkerton
- Business-focused signage at the soccer field
- A re-launch of the fish art walking tour, including a new art installation in the Market Garden

County support for these initiatives is greatly appreciated.

CIP Business Grants

Nine business improvement grants under Brockton's CIP program have been approved so far in 2026, following strong interest generated by staff's promotional efforts.

At its March 10th meeting, Council approved an increase to the 2026 program budget. A second intake of applications has since been advertised, and it is anticipated that all available funds will again be fully allocated.

To date, approved projects include improvements to a vacant or underutilized property, an accessibility upgrade, an energy-efficiency improvement, as well as several signage and façade enhancement projects.

Business Recognitions

The Municipality of Brockton will recognize the following businesses this quarter:

- All Her Works Studio (Walkerton) – New business
- Inques Gallery (Walkerton) – New business
- Grey Bruce Therapy (Walkerton) – New business
- First Line Security (Walkerton) – Home-based business relocating to a commercial storefront

Upcoming recognitions are being planned for two additional new businesses: Bruce Family Dentistry and Cody's Egg Shack. The permanent location of First Choice Property Maintenance will also be recognized, along with two milestone anniversaries: Grey-Bruce Interiors (35 years) and Kisses Lifeology (25 years).

Coffee With The Mayor

A business networking event for the first quarter of 2026 has been replaced with a Coffee With The Mayor event. Mayor Chris Peabody will meet with interested business owners and members of the public on the morning of Wednesday, April 8, at Victoria Jubilee Hall. The Municipality's Business After 5 networking events will resume in the next quarter.

International Plowing Match & Rural Expo

Planning for the 2026 International Plowing Match & Rural Expo continue to progress. Discussions are ongoing regarding the Bruce County Showcase, which will feature a dedicated area highlighting Brockton. In addition, the CDC is organizing a "Discover Downtown Walkerton" event, consisting of an afternoon and evening of dining and shopping experiences. This initiative is intended to encourage visitors staying in the IPM RV Park to explore Walkerton and experience the community's local businesses and amenities.

Saugeen Connects

The CDC continues to participate in monthly Saugeen Connects meetings, a regional partnership between the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation and five member municipalities, including Brockton. The initiative's mission is to support economic growth, foster youth retention and development, encourage business growth and retention, and attract newcomers as residents, workers, entrepreneurs, and investors.

Current initiatives include the Advancing Women Economically (AWE) webinar series and the Women of Wellington Saugeen Area (WOWSA) program, which offers monthly networking opportunities. Saugeen Connects also hosted a successful International Women's Day event earlier this month and is preparing for the upcoming Student Start Up Program (SSUP). Brockton continues to be well represented across these programs, reflecting strong local engagement.

Clean Energy Frontier

The CDC continues to attend meetings with the Clean Energy Frontier, which is working to advance its regional leadership in sustainable economic development and innovation. The organization has recently unveiled a refreshed brand identity, including a new tagline, "A bright future for Ontario starts here," which reflects its commitment to positioning the region as a hub for clean energy investment, talent attraction, and forward-looking growth.

In addition, the Clean Energy Frontier has completed its Community Resiliency Strategy project, which focused on identifying opportunities to strengthen local capacity, support climate adaptation, and enhance long-term economic resilience across member communities. The strategy provides a framework for collaboration and action, helping to guide future initiatives that align with regional priorities and emerging opportunities in the clean energy sector.

Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership

The Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP) Partnership Council met on March 5, 2026. Members, including the CDC, received an overview of the draft Community Action Plan, which outlines key priorities and strategies to support newcomer attraction, integration, and retention across the region over the next three

years. Implementation roadmaps are currently being developed to define specific actions, partners, timelines, and performance measures. The Partnership also discussed upcoming Cultural Responsiveness training and provided input on the development of an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training program for partner organizations.

Additional updates included recent and upcoming initiatives such as an Immigration and Employment Law workshop held in January, early planning for a regional immigration conference, and potential collaboration opportunities with the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON), particularly in relation to volunteer opportunities and community programming for newcomers. The Council also noted ongoing work including a regional immigrant experience survey led by the University of Guelph Research Shop, enhancements to the YMCA Settlement and Language Services referral system, and new labour market reports underscoring the role of newcomer talent in addressing workforce needs. The draft Community Action Plan is expected to be released publicly soon and will be shared with Council once available.

Tourism Updates

The Municipality of Brockton continues to advance several tourism-related initiatives. A new set of pole banners has been ordered for the Market Garden, promoting upcoming events including Walkerton Homecoming and the International Plowing Match. County of Bruce tourism staff recently attended the Outdoor Adventure Show in Toronto, where they engaged with approximately 10,000 visitors and distributed promotional materials highlighting Brockton as a four-season destination.

Locally, reservations have recently opened for the Lobies Park Campground, which will be staffed on a part-time basis by the Community Services Department. Staff are also finalizing an updated 2026 events rack card and continuing work on the Brockton Visitor and Community Guide in partnership with The Walkerton Herald-Times. The guide is expected to be printed in advance of the annual Grey-Bruce brochure swap, scheduled to take place in Cargill in early May.

Brockton's Community Goals:

The content and recommendations in this report support advancing the priorities to **Build a Better Brockton** in one or more of the following areas: **Heritage, Culture, and Community, Quality of Life, Municipal Governance, Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment, and/or Economic Development.**

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:

Christine Brandt

Christine Brandt, Community Development Coordinator

Reviewed By:

Sonya Watson

Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer