

Report to Council

Report Title:	Community Development Coordinator Update – April 2021		
Prepared By:	Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator		
Department:	Economic Development		
Date:	April 13, 2021		
Report Number:	ED2021-02	File Number:	C11ED
Attachments:	Strategic Plan Business Survey – Print Version Strategic Plan Media Release Saugeen SSUP Sponsorship Package SSUP Brochure		

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby accepts Report Number ED2021-02 - Community Development Coordinator Update – April 2021, prepared by Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator, for information purposes.

Report:

Background:

The Community Development Coordinator files regular updates to Council about community and economic development. Topics covered in this report include:

- COVID-19 Response
- Strategic Plan Business Survey
- Tourism
- Saugeen Connects Initiatives & Student Start-up Program Sponsorship
- BIA Update
- New Businesses and Closures
- Walkerton Clean Water Legacy Fund

Analysis:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be the primary business concern in Brockton as the province enters its third lockdown, shuttering most of our commercial establishments for at least four weeks. Business owners are compliant, but deflated. Many were just starting to recover from the previous lockdown that began on Boxing Day and stretched into February.

We issued several newsletters to businesses communicating about the Ontario Small Business Support Grant, offering \$10,000 to \$20,000 in assistance. Unfortunately, some of our newer businesses were not eligible, as they had not been in business long enough to show a loss due to COVID-19. The majority have taken advantage of the grant. It is unclear whether funding will be offered to help compensate for the current lockdown.

Uptake on the federal Regional Relief and Recovery Fund by Brockton businesses has been strong, with 12 businesses receiving a total of \$469,000 in loans through the Saugeen Economic Development Corp. A limited amount of money is also still available through the Bruce County Sustainability Fund.

While the current economic climate is uncertain, we are forging ahead with a four-year action plan for economic development as part of the broader Strategic Action Plan 2025 for Brockton. A strategic planning meeting was held with the Economic Development Committee in February, followed by the release of an online business survey that has been sent to businesses through various channels, including a business e-newsletter, BIA newsletter, and direct emails. Hard copies are available at the municipal office, and through some rural businesses. We have also attempted to reach out to agri-businesses through the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Print ads and a second news release (see attached) will be published next week to help spur more survey responses. We have also extended the deadline to April 19, 2021.

Tourism operations in Cargill are in the final planning stages, and the CDC continues to work with the Cargill/Greenock Swamp Promotional Association and Kevin McKague, the new owner of the buildings that the group will be renting for the Visitor Centre and Margaret's Mercantile activities. Building renovations are going very well and are on target for completion in mid-May. The swamp tours are not expected to take place this year, although there is still hope that the dinky train will resume.

The CDC attended a regional tourism meeting hosted by Bruce County and an informative webinar, "Shift Happens," by destination marketing expert Roger Brooks, who offered ideas on how to make your downtown sparkle -- not just for tourists and residents but for developers, site selectors and investors, who are increasingly looking for vibrant communities in addition to land and infrastructure. In a post-COVID era, where people can work anywhere, they will be drawn to communities with active urban centres, recreational assets and culture, he said, giving many examples of things that will attract people to downtowns, from sidewalk patios, blade signs, and benches, to live entertainment and evening shopping and dining.

A strong year for tourism is predicted when pent up demand is unleashed and COVID-19 restrictions loosen. We expect to see a surge in people visiting friends and family in this region.

The CDC worked with the Saugeen Connects group to launch two successful programs this winter, both assisted by the Rural Economic Development fund. The 10-week Advancing Women Economically (AWE) program was fully subscribed, with participants receiving a certificate and \$500 completion award to use towards their business. A second program, focused on succession planning, was also well attended.

We are currently launching our second summer of SSUP, the Saugeen Student Start-Up Program begun in 2019, and are looking for sponsors and student entrepreneurs interested in coming onboard. The program includes online training in basic accounting, marketing and customer service, with \$450 in funding allotted to

students that are successful. The CDC will be seeking sponsorship support from community groups and businesses. Sponsorship opportunities range from 5 Star (\$1,500) to 1 Star (\$300). Details provided in the attached documents.

The East Ridge Business Park continues to draw interest from developers, as neighbouring municipalities have very little serviced industrial land. We are working towards marketing lots that will hopefully be serviced by fall under our Master Servicing Plan to potential buyers that show a high degree of interest. We are dealing with interested parties as inquiries come in.

The CDC and CAO Sonya Watson met with the Walkerton BIA's manager and president to review matters of mutual interest, including business awards, downtown business recognitions and promotions. Brockton's inaugural business awards program was cancelled last year due to COVID-19 and was slated to take place this fall. The BIA was planning to also launch a business of the year award, at its AGM in January, 2022. The two groups will now partner on the awards, and continue to partner on business recognitions.

New businesses in Brockton include Essential Wellness, Roc n Duke Pets, Monique Spa, and Ti Amo restaurant. Coming soon: Papa V's Pizza and Wings, Provision Hydroponics & Garden Supply, and Walkerton Physiotherapy & Sports Injury Clinic. The CDC has also met with the new owners of the former Stark Mill near Paisley (now called the Paisley Mill), to learn of exciting plans there for short-term accommodation rentals and possible retail uses.

Regrettably, Creations by Susan in Walkerton is closing, and the Northern Credit Union in Elmwood, which has been closed since the pandemic hit last March, and will not reopen, instead consolidating with the branch in Chesley. A letter of regret was sent on behalf of Brockton and West Grey to express our disappointment on behalf of the community. The credit union has offered to contribute to a community project in Elmwood to show appreciation and offer a positive impression on the community. In consultation with West Grey we have suggested upgrades to the audio-visual system at the Elmwood Community Centre which was an item on their capital listing.

The Walkerton Clean Water Legacy Fund is now open for student applications on the Community Foundation Grey Bruce website, at <https://www.communityfoundationgreybruce.com/students/applications/>. To date, we have received \$18,000 in donations, most recently from the Walkerton Rotary Club, contributing \$1,000 this year and promising at least that amount for each of the next 10 years. Applications will be open until May 14th, and the award announced on the May long weekend to coincide with the anniversary of the Walkerton e-coli tragedy.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

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| • Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity? | Yes |

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

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

There are no budgetary implications resulting from this report.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Paulette Peirol, Community Development Coordinator

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer