



HURON
C O U N T Y

**Economic
Development
Board**

**2015-2016
ANNUAL
REPORT**



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CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Formed in January of 2015, the Huron County Economic Development Board advises County Council on matters related to economic development. Comprised of eight directors from the private sector and three members of Council, the Board represents a cross section of leaders from the local economy. I am delighted with the talent at our table and the passionate ideas expressed during our discussions!

Since establishment, the Board has been active on a number of foundational issues. We are now focused on more specific activities designed to accelerate the County's progress in a rapidly changing environment.

This report summarizes the major initiatives undertaken over the past year. If you have questions or would like to offer your input on our initiatives, please reach out to department staff who can assist you, or directly to members of the Board listed in this report. Our work is strengthened by feedback received from our community and from your engagement in making Huron County a better place to live, work and play.

As always, we invite you to join the conversation and help deliver on our slogan "*Huron County: More than you imagined.*"

Jim Lynn



2015-2016 BOARD MEMBERS

Jim Lynn, Chair

John Marshall, Vice Chair

Joe Steffler, Councillor

James Eddington

Peter Smith

Steve Baker

Jim Ginn, Warden

Paul Gowing, Past Warden

Steven Sparling

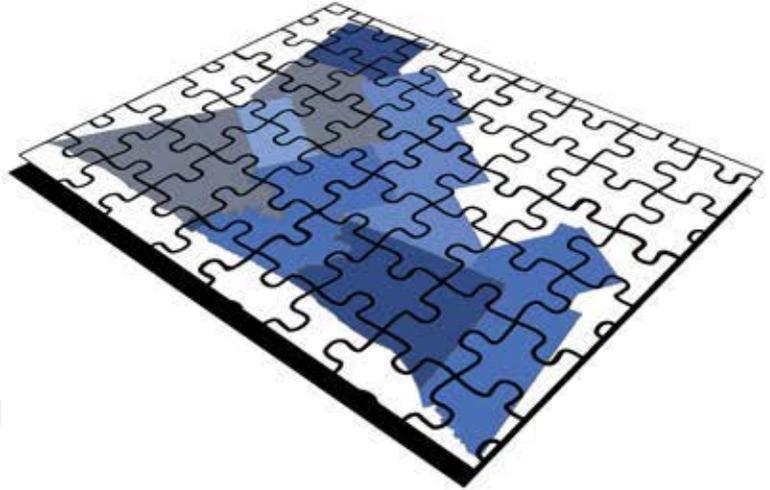
Maureen Nummelin

Martin Vanderloo

A Regional Approach to Strategic Planning

Economic opportunities can be found just about anywhere. However, it takes creative minds to spot them, visionaries to shape them and leaders to realize them.

Using a process designed and led by OMAFRA, the County of Huron along with its nine member municipalities worked together to develop integrated strategic economic development plans. This process involved tapping into the collective intelligence and talents of community stakeholders and feeding information up through local groups to a centralized 'core team' of facilitators.



The collective-impact approach is based on the idea that we are stronger when working together towards a common goal. This process resulted in strategic plans for both the upper and lower tiers that are relevant, coordinated and mutually reinforcing. By working collectively, the impact of each strategic plan will be greater and provides a stronger regional approach to economic development in Huron County.

To further support a regional approach, the County has re-launched the Huron Economic Development Partnership, which is an application-based fund open to each municipality that offers up to \$10,000 to complete an action item identified within their strategic economic development plan.

Team At Work: Streamlining the Development Process

Motivated by a shared commitment to continuous improvement, a working group comprised of upper and lower tier staff have been meeting to streamline the development process in Huron County. Municipal CAOs, public works and economic development staff, as well as the planners serving both tiers have been hard at work identifying barriers and how they can be overcome; comparing best-practices and exploring standardized procedures to find efficiencies; and, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved to eliminate any gaps in the development pipeline.

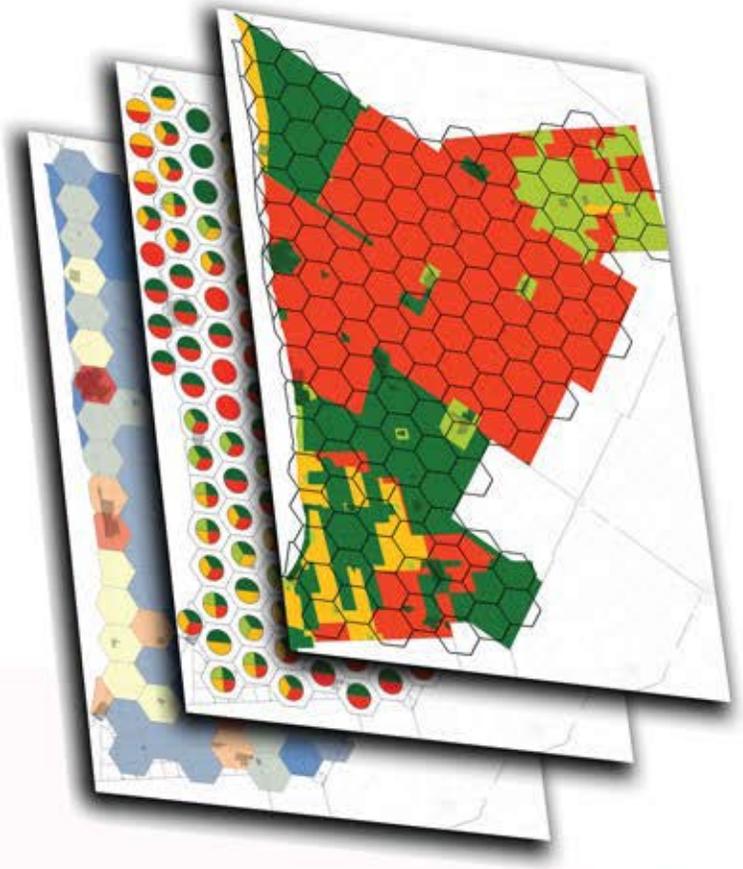
Why? Because everyone at the table knows that attracting regional development is highly competitive and that our operations need to be as 'business friendly' as possible [period!] Implementing these enhancements is currently underway, and the effort to improve will continue.

Expanding Broadband Internet Access

Over the last two years County staff have been working with local Internet service providers to develop made-in-Huron solutions that go the 'last-mile' in connecting our residents to high-speed broadband service. This work has yielded progress with the announcement on January 23rd, 2017 of a successful application to the joint federal/provincial *Small Communities Fund*. This \$1.77M broadband project will expand the broadband network and improve connectivity for nearly a thousand homes, several small businesses and one school in Huron County.

Regions set to receive the upgraded service include the shoreline between Amberley and Port Albert, the area of Whitechurch, Kinburn-Winthrop and Shipka-Greenway-Mount Carmel.

Expanding access to high-speed Internet remains a priority in 2017 as staff and the local service providers work together to submit an application to the Government of Canada's *Connect to Innovate* program in April. To support this application, an online survey collected over 1700 responses from county residents about the Internet speeds experienced at their homes. This data will be presented to senior governments as evidence of our need in Huron County for more broadband infrastructure funding.



Expand broadband Internet access in Huron County

Please participate in this short survey



"High-speed Internet access is about connecting small businesses to the marketplace and our youth to their future." - Jim Ginn, Warden

2016 R2R Conference

Hosted by the Canadian Centre for Rural Creativity in partnership with the County of Huron, the first Rural to Rural (R2R) Conference was held in Blyth in the autumn of 2016. R2R was an open invitation to share ideas, establish new partnerships, and create innovative solutions that overcome persistent challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

In total, 99 delegates from across Canada, the United States, and as far away as the Netherlands were immersed in a series of guest presentations, panel discussions, rural-inspired works of art – including locally supplied cuisine, and a lot of old-fashioned conversation. While government and academia were represented at the conference, the majority of delegates (65%) self-identified as 'ruralists' wanting to unlock the potential of their communities. More information about the conference can be found at ruralcreativity.org. Given the overwhelmingly positive response from participants, planning is already underway for the 2018 R2R event!



CANADIAN
CENTRE FOR
RURAL CREATIVITY

Bruce Power Refurbishment Plan

Bruce Power has successfully renegotiated a long-term power purchase agreement with the Province of Ontario that will see substantial plant infrastructure investments over the next two decades.



Six units at the facility will undergo refurbishment with the first upgrades beginning in 2020 on Unit 6. It is estimated the six refurbishments in the agreement will cost \$8 billion (\$2014), in addition to \$5 billion (\$2014) that will support a range of other life-extension activities from 2016-53.

In the short-term, between 2016 and 2020, the company will be investing approximately \$2.3 billion (\$2014) as part of this plan, which is incremental to the company's ongoing financial investments to sustain eight units of operation.

Long-term resource planning is an important consideration and Bruce Power has noted that the "opportunity to source locally is a key sustainability strategy for large, multi-year infrastructure projects." The Huron County Warden is part of the Bruce Power Advisory Committee and will ensure that the interests of our residents and businesses are represented in this significant economic development investment.

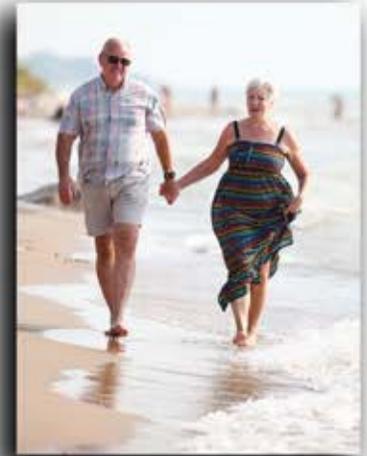
Partnerships with Regional Tourism Organization

The Huron County Economic Development Department has entered into agreements with the Regional Tourism Organization (RT04) to undertake three projects that advance strategic planning, implementation and performance of Huron County's primary tourism destinations: Blyth & Blyth Festival, Town of Bayfield and Goderich to Guelph (G2G) Rail Trail.



Each of these projects offer a signature Huron County experience that, with development support, are expected to grow our region as a tourism destination.

These development supports include a facilitated stakeholder discussion to create a destination strategy for Blyth; an economic impact-of-tourism study for Bayfield that includes research into the visitor profile and the establishment of key performance indicators so that future investment decisions are based on data; and, the creation of one master plan for the G2G Trail through consultations with stakeholder associations to prioritize infrastructure projects (i.e., bridge and trail upgrades).



Looking Forward: Huron County to Host 2017 IPM

Huron County has the distinct honour of hosting the 100th International Plowing Match in Walton this September. The event is going to be big. How big? Over the five-day event, 100,000 people are forecast to descend on the match and surrounding region.

This presents an incredible opportunity to show off how we live, work and play in Huron County. Our visitor experience strategy is simple: capture their imagination and touch their hearts.



Plans are coming together to deliver an immersive Huron County Showcase featuring our strengths and signature stories: Our agriculture, environment, industry, culture and people, all on display and powered by our proud staff and volunteers. And did we mention that all of this is taking place against the backdrop of Canada's 150th birthday!

This September, we'll see you in Walton!

SMALL BUSINESS CENTRE

create. build. lead.

Delivered in partnership with the Province of Ontario, the Huron County Small Business Enterprise Centre offers a range of services to small business owners and entrepreneurs. Our program menu includes free consultations with qualified business professionals, free business plan reviews by experts, training workshops and professional development seminars, and guidance on start-up processes to get your business idea off the ground.

During the 2015-2016 period:



Our office provided **218** one-to-one business consultations and **19** business workshops with **366** attending
and



SBC granted **\$48,000** in funding to **14** new or expanding businesses with our Starter and Summer Company programs
which



Created **25** Full Time Equivalent jobs in our communities

NEED A DEVELOPMENT SOLUTION?



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C O U N T Y

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