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Land Acknowledgment

The County of Huron would like to acknowledge that the land we stand upon today is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Neutral peoples. We recognize the First Peoples’ continued stewardship of the land and water, and that this territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and resources by the Great Lakes in peace.

We would also like to acknowledge and recognize the Upper Canada Treaties signed in regards to this land, which include Treaty #29 and Treaty #45 1/2, and our roles as treaty people, committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation, gratitude, and respect with all First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.
The County of Huron recognizes Treaties 29 and 45½

Est. 1847

9 Municipalities
3,400 Square km

Population 61,366

95% of Huron County residents are very satisfied with life.

25,000+ Private Households

58 unique communities

Huron County has more than 1700 Cultural assets

A living wage in Huron County is: $17.95

Huron is the most agriculturally productive county in Ontario!

113,170 Acres Wheat
193,419 Acres Soybeans
60,313 Cattle & calves
5,664,213 Hens & chickens

EV Chargers
36

Unique Beaches
15

Scenic Shoreline
100 km

Hiking Trails
30+

Warden’s Message

In 2021, Council, staff, and many dedicated community partners worked together for the betterment of our region. Through this shared effort and incredible hard work, we were able to make significant strides on multiple fronts.

We’ve taken action to address homelessness, including embarking on a number of housing initiatives. We’ve expanded broadband coverage, and taken meaningful steps to address climate change. We’re modernizing many of the County’s corporate services, and have undertaken several creative initiatives to increase public communication and engagement. All of this, and more, happened while we continued to tackle the ever-changing demands of responding to COVID-19.

Together, we have demonstrated that our community is a compassionate and caring place that fosters goodwill and collaboration. We’ve proved that through shared enthusiasm and effort, we can accomplish great things.

This report highlights some of our collective accomplishments. With heartfelt thanks, I commend all who contributed to the progress made in 2021 and look forward to accomplishing even more in the years ahead.

Glen McNeil, Huron County Warden
Council Composition

**Huron County Warden**
Glen McNeil

**Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh**
Glen McNeil, Mayor
Roger Watt, Deputy-Mayor

**Bluewater**
Paul Klopp, Mayor
Jim Fergusson, Deputy Mayor

**Central Huron**
Jim Ginn, Mayor
Dave Jewitt, Deputy Mayor

**Goderich**
John Grace, Mayor
Myles Murdock, Deputy Mayor

**Howick**
Doug Harding, Reeve

**Huron East**
Bernie MacLellan, Mayor
Robert Fisher, Deputy Mayor

**Morris-Turnberry**
Jamie Heffer, Mayor

**North Huron**
Bernie Bailey, Reeve

**South Huron**
George Finch, Mayor
Jim Dietrich, Deputy Mayor
Council Priorities

In June 2021, Council met with Gordon A. McIntosh Consulting to define the strategic priorities of Council for the remainder of Council’s current term.

These sessions provide County Council with the opportunity to reflect on the bigger picture, and consider how the corporation can strategically work together to meet community needs. It’s setting short term and long term goals for the benefit of the County. Ultimately, it’s about making Huron a better place to live, work and play.

Huron County Mission
A community for generations.

Huron County Vision
We cultivate a healthy environment for prosperous living.

Huron County Values
Integrity, teamwork, and excellence.

2021 Huron County Council’s Strategic Priorities

1. Homelessness short-term strategy
2. Attainable housing initiatives
3. Affordable housing initiatives
4. Broadband advocacy
5. County facility considerations
6. Public communication
7. Service Delivery Review (SDR)
8. Economic Development Strategy
9. Community collaboration
10. Poverty reduction
11. Council training
12. COVID-19 recovery efforts
13. Asset management funding
14. Bylaw review
CAO’s Message

2021 was a challenging year for staff. Many, if not all, County staff spent the year working in new ways. Some staff worked remotely, others in altered roles, and some staff were redeployed to entirely new service areas that were in critical need.

This massive shift in our world, community, and workplace required innovation in the way we think. It meant we needed new ways to approach challenges and new solutions for how we provide services. This shift was difficult, for a variety of reasons, but it was also very good.

The pandemic required us to be creative and open to modern ways of doing business. I’m so proud of the Huron County team for how they’ve been able to pivot, refocus, and provide new or altered services in such a short period of time. The dedication, flexibility, and ingenuity of County staff over the last year has been nothing short of outstanding.

We’re moving forward, armed with new knowledge and new tools. It’s an exciting time for our staff and the entire Huron community. I’m looking forward to all that is to come!

Meighan Wark, County of Huron, CAO
County of Huron Organizational Structure

- Clerk
- Communications
- Executive Assistant
- Council
- CAO

- Cultural Services
  - Museum/Gaol/Archives/Programs
  - Library
- Economic Development
- Homes for the Aged
- Human Resources
- Operations & Emergency Services
  - Public Works
  - Emergency Services
- Planning
- Social & Property Services
  - Ontario Works
  - Children's Services
  - Housing Services
  - Property Services
- Treasury & Corporate Services
  - Information Technology/GIS
  - Treasury/Provincial Offences
Modernizing Corporate Services

In an effort to serve the community better, the County of Huron is working to modernize corporate services.

The goal of the County’s modernization effort is to streamline and improve County services, so that the County’s organizational structure better aligns with its corporate goals. In order to continue to be successful and operate sustainably in the future, it is essential that the corporation put in effort to modernize services now.

Some of the modernizing efforts currently underway include:

Climate Change Action

The County of Huron is committed to taking action on climate change. The effects of climate change are being felt around the world and are certainly already visible in Huron County. Given that municipalities are often at the forefront of responding to these events it’s important that the County prepare for future changes and ensure that the strategies and resources are in place to reduce, respond to, and recover from whatever may come.

Some of the actions currently being taken to address climate change in Huron County include:

- The adoption of the Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2020-2025.
- Use of a newly developed Climate Lens Tool.
- The development of a Conservation and Climate Change Committee.
Communications

Improved communications is a vital component of the County’s modernization plan. A modern workforce, that includes remote workers, will need effective ways to interact. A physically distanced community will need new ways to collaborate and engage safely.

For these reasons and more, the County is increasing Corporate Communications including:

- **Media relations.** Improved *news release* process to better engage with local media outlets. In turn, the community is better informed.

- **Community Engagement.** The County has developed a new *virtual engagement platform* called Huron County Connects.

- **Social Media.** Increased use of *social media* enables to County to interact with community members.

Human Resources

Human Resources and Corporate Services are modernizing several of their staff services. These initiatives will help the County streamline many staff workflows and will save time and money overall.

Some of the Human Resource and Corporate Services modernization efforts underway include:

- **Implementing a new Human Resource Information System (HRIS).** This new employee self-service software maintains, manages, and processes detailed employee information.

- **Performing a Service Delivery Review (SDR).** In 2020 and 2021, consultants conducted a complete review of County services that looked at opportunities for improvements and efficiencies.

- **Remote Work Policies and Tools.** For the corporation to prioritize health and safety in the workplace, it must have remote work policies and technologies in place.

- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** Improving equity, diversity and inclusion practices is essential in any modern workplace. Through improved EDI practices the County demonstrates that it values all staff and community members.
Treasury

There are many factors that affect the County’s operating and capital budget, and these are closely tied to the priorities set out by Council in strategic planning sessions. The County of Huron wants to ensure long-term sustainability while maintaining essential & valued services.

Like many municipalities, the financial sustainability of municipal services has been strained in the past year and more, as we have all gone through extraordinary challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the County has a Financial Sustainability Management Strategy:

- Manage Assets – Asset Management Plan
- Control Spending
- Maintain Reserves
- Increase Efficiencies
- Maintain a level and realistic levy

Find out more about Huron County’s budgeting process: www.HuronCounty.ca/budget

Provincial Offences Administration

*Provincial Offences* are non-criminal charges and include fines issued under the Highway Traffic Act, Liquor Licence Act, Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act, municipal by-laws and other Provincial Acts. In 2021, 5,922 charges were received. Provincial Offences Administration remained open, but Courts were held virtually.
2021 Priority Projects

County Council leads and guides the Corporation of the County of Huron. These elected representatives from across Huron County set priorities for the corporation. In 2021, some of Council’s priorities included:

1. Pandemic Response
2. Considering Various Housing Initiatives
3. Preventing and Addressing Homelessness
4. Expanding Broadband Service in Huron County
1. Pandemic Response Effort

Crisis Management

Emergency Management Planning

The Province of Ontario requires all municipalities to have an Emergency Management Coordinator and an Emergency Response Plan. Huron County and its member municipalities have emergency plans and programs in place to coordinate response to extraordinary situations.

Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the EOC has met regularly. The meetings include Senior Management of all County of Huron departments, the Warden, as well as representatives from Huron-Perth Public Health, local hospitals, and Ontario Provincial Police. This group shares crisis emergency information and adjusts County service delivery to respond appropriately.

State of Emergency

In 2020, the County of Huron declared a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This State of Emergency remained in place throughout 2021.

Emergency Information Sharing

The Emergency Information Officer keeps the public informed on emergency service delivery changes through the County’s website and Facebook page.

Mass Vaccination Clinics

The Emergency Management Coordinator worked in partnership with Huron-Perth Public Health, local stakeholders and community volunteers to host 160 Mass Vaccination Clinics throughout Huron County in 2021.
2. Housing Initiatives

A primary goal of the County is to help build vibrant, resilient, and inclusive communities. A healthy mix of housing options, from affordable rental housing, single-family homes, duplexes, apartment buildings, as well as developments for seniors, ensures opportunities for all individuals to improve their economic situation and contribute to their communities in meaningful ways.

In recent years, many of Ontario’s large and mid-sized cities, home prices and rental rates have risen faster than incomes.

Homes:
• 83% of home buyers can’t afford an average resale home
• Resale home prices are up 8-9%
• Rental prices are up 10-15%
• Incomes are only up 2%

Rentals:
• 56% of renters can’t afford an average 2 bedroom apartment
• Less than 2% of rentals are vacant

Huron County is seeing similar trends.

• The Community Investment for Affordable Housing report by Scaled Purpose Inc. concluded that a minimum hourly wage of $23.25 is required for a single-income household to affordably rent an average priced 1-bedroom apartment ($940/month).
• It also concluded that in dual income households, each partner would need to earn a minimum of $25/hr, and work full time hours, to afford ownership of an average priced home in Huron County.

Source: https://nhuron-pub.escibemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=22904

While what these statistics represent is concerning, the good news is that the County is taking action to address affordable and attainable housing on multiple fronts.

In recent years the County’s Planning department has seen a significant increase in development applications locally.

Source: https://www.ontario.ca/page/more-homes-more-choice-ontarios-housing-supply-action-plan#section
Some of the initiatives currently underway by the County to address affordable and attainable housing in Huron include:

- **Residential Intensification Guidelines RIGS.**

  The *Residential Intensification Guidelines* (RIGS) is a tool for guiding the design of residential intensification projects in the County. The document applies to all residential intensification projects in the County with an emphasis on multi-unit forms of development.

- **Review of Planning Documents (Zoning Changes).**

  A review of all the rules related to housing in these documents ensures that at least the minimum standards are achieved for current and future housing needs of the community (e.g. permitting 2 units as of right in all zones). This also means reviewing those terms that are commonly amended to allow for higher density builds. This can help lead to more housing by giving more options and flexibility when housing developments are going through the planning and approval process for both established neighbourhoods and undeveloped land.

- **Residential Development Pre-Zoning.**

  For some land, specifically large undeveloped land, the common practice is to zone that piece of land at the time a proposal is brought forward. An alternative and proactive option is to pre-zone these large areas of land with a set minimum requirement for residential density. This means that a large undeveloped section of land can be automatically zoned that allows for a certain density of residences when the land is proposed to be physically developed.

  The advantage of this practice is that it would make it simple and straightforward for developers to build within the “pre-zoned” area. This can help the planning process move forward more smoothly because it lessens the amount of procedural paperwork required for a new builds because it’s already been done!
Municipal Rental Builds.

The current wait list for the County’s 415 rent-g geared-to-income units varies between 1-5 years depending on location and apartment type. As of December 2021 there were 535 individuals on the wait list, up from 239 in 2015. In 2021, Social and Property Services staff began exploring supportive housing requirements and funding opportunities that align with the County’s Long-Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan, with the hope of expanding County-owned housing stock in the future.

The Corporation of the County of Huron is dedicated to enhancing the social and economic well-being of Huron County. This includes continuing work to address Supportive, Affordable and Attainable Housing opportunities.

Individuals have a fundamental right to housing without discrimination as protected under the Ontario’s Human Rights Code.

Find out more about what the County is doing to address housing needs in Huron:
www.HuronCounty.ca/plandev/
3. Addressing Homelessness

Enumeration, Registry Week and By Name List

Data collection, including identifying who and how many individuals and families are experiencing homelessness in the community, enables Huron County Social Services staff to monitor progress and make informed decisions.

The 2018 enumeration project indicated that Huron had 100 individuals facing homelessness. In 2021 the enumeration project indicated that number has grown to 169.

Cold Weather Emergency Shelter

In 2020 and 2021, the County of Huron partnered with Choices for Change, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), and Lakeshore United Church to provide the Huron Heart to Home: Out of the Cold emergency shelter.

*During the initial COVID-19 community response, the County supported 73 households in 21 emergency motel rooms over seven months, to enable access to private spaces. Those spaces concluded in December and individuals who were not able to find housing were transferred to Huron Out of the Cold Heart to Home. 48 unique individuals accessed the emergency shelter in the 2020/2021 season.

Learn more about homelessness and the benefits of adopting a Housing First model in Huron: www.connectedcountyofhuron.ca/huron-heart-to-home

Average monthly cost of housing someone while homeless.

The cost of doing nothing.

As of 2013, homelessness cost the Canadian economy $7.03 billion annually (up from $4.5-6 billion in 2007). This includes provision of emergency shelters and community supports, but also accounts for the increased costs of emergency services (including fire, police and EMS), health care, the criminal justice system.

"For high-needs participants, every $10 investment in housing assistance with individualized support services resulted in average savings of $21.72 (in avoided costs for hospitalizations and other services)." - Ontario’s Homelessness Action Plan

Individuals accessing temporary emergency shelter in Huron County
Stability Team

The Stability Team are Social and Property Services staff and staff from our partner agencies, Choices for Change and Canadian Mental Health Association, who work directly with clients, connecting them to the services and supports they require. These staff are specially trained to assist individuals and families in crisis and/or facing housing instability.

Coordinated Action

Social and Property Services staff have taken the lead and are partnering with multiple agencies and not-for-profits to develop a coordinated system of care in Huron County.

Financial Support

Social and Property Services staff administer multiple funding programs, including:
- Ontario Works
- Pathways to Self-Sufficiency
- Canada Housing Benefit
- Urgent Relief Funds, in partnership with Perth-Huron United Way
- And more!

Find out more about homelessness in Huron County: HuronCounty.ca/social-services/housing/#homelessness
4. Expanding Broadband

Huron County has recognized the need for the expansion of broadband services in rural areas. As such Huron County is a member of the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT). SWIFT is a non-profit municipally-led broadband expansion project created to improve internet connectivity in under served communities and rural areas across Southwestern Ontario.

The projects outlined here include all SWIFT 1.0 and SWIFT Plus projects that have been approved in Huron County. Huron County Council has contributed $678,557 to support and develop the SWIFT organization and contributed $2,786,418 towards direct broadband infrastructure construction.

The total value of the broadband projects is $15,230,238 (4.53 investment multiplier) serving a total of 1813 premises along 263km of road. This equates to an average of $8,400 per premise and an average density of 6.89 premises per kilometer.

The 10 SWIFT Broadband Projects in Huron County:

**The Porter’s Hill project** will be implemented by Tuckersmith Communications. The project value is $1.92 million (including $0.72 million in funding) and will service 235 premises along 63.6km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by February 28, 2023.

**The Summerhill project** will be implemented by Tuckersmith Communications. The project value is $1.12 million (including $0.51 million in funding) and will service 121 premises along 42.1km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by February 28, 2023.

**The Roxboro project** will be implemented by Tuckersmith Communications. The project value is $0.19 million (including $0.09 million in funding) and will service 25 premises along 5.4km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by March 31, 2022.

**The Henfryn project** will be implemented by Tuckersmith Communications. The project value is $0.25 million (including $0.06 million in funding) and will service 37 premises along 7.9km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by June 30, 2022.
The Blue Water Beach project will be implemented by HuronTel. The project value is $1.62 million (including $1.09 million in funding) and will service 185 premises along 23.6km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by June 30, 2023.

The Marnoch project will be implemented by HuronTel. The project value is $2.1 million (including $0.68 million in funding) and will service 177 premises along 57km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by June 30, 2023.

The Lumley project will be implemented by Hay Communications and includes service along Thames Road, Lumley, and Hurondale. The project value is $2.7 million (including $1.48 million in funding) and will service 234 premises along 70.1km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by June 30, 2022.

The South Benmiller project will be implemented by HuronTel. The project value is $1.1 million (including $0.74 million in funding) and will service 125 premises along 29km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by June 30, 2023.

The Sunshine project will be implemented by HuronTel. The project value is $0.38 million (including $0.12 million in funding) and will service 47 premises along 12.1km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by February 28, 2022.

The Wroxeter project will be implemented by Wightman Telecom and includes service in Wroxeter, Gorrie, and Fordwich. The project value is $3.69 million (including $1.14 million in funding) and will service 680 premises along 23.7km of road. The project is estimated to be in service by June 15, 2022.
County Service Areas

What follows are highlights of some of the work undertaken by County departments in 2021. To find out more about County services visit: www.HuronCounty.ca

1. Administration and Corporate Services
2. Cultural Services
3. Economic Development
4. Emergency Services
5. Long-term Care: Huronview & Huronlea
6. Planning and Development
7. Public Works
8. Social & Property Services
1. Administration and Corporate Services

Clerk’s Office

In 2021, the Clerk’s Office hosted approximately 30 County Council Meetings and 28 Committee and Board meetings, virtually. The Clerk’s Office also oversees the County’s records management program and accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance with provincial legislation. This team continues its work in ensuring a transparent and accessible bridge between County Council and Huron residents.

Human Resources

In addition to the many modernization projects underway, the Human Resources department supported a redeployment program for staff impacted by COVID-19. Staff whose service delivery was altered, as a result of the pandemic, we’re quickly retrained and redeployed to critical areas of the organization, such as Long-term Care, Property Services, Communications, and Economic Development. This redeployment program ensured that critical areas of service were well-supported through out the course of the pandemic.
Communications

Communications staff manage a number of channels that keep the public and staff informed. This team issues media releases, manages the corporate website, intranet, and social media, and they facilitate projects on the County’s online engagement platform, Huron County Connects.

Some projects this team launched in 2021 include:
- The *Be Part of the Solution* Housing & Homelessness Campaign
- A New Corporate Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/CountyofHuron](http://www.facebook.com/CountyofHuron)

Business Technology Solutions (BTS)

This year, Business Technology Solutions has focused the majority of their work in supporting County systems and departments to provide the best quality remote operations and customer service tools possible. While implementing new technologies in a response to the pandemic, this team continues to work behind the scenes to keep the County’s systems safe, reliable, and secure.
2. Cultural Services

**Huron County Library**

The ongoing ebbs and flows of the pandemic have meant Library staff have had to be flexible and regularly pivot service delivery. During this time, staff have worked to ensure the community has had maximum access to essential library services and programs.

**Curbside Service**

The Library offered curbside service during two branch-wide closures in 2021. Curbside services saw 12,308 curbside checkouts and 1,915 computer bookings.

**New Library Brand**

The Huron County Library unveiled a *new look* in 2021! The refreshed brand better represents the vibrant and engaging role the library plays in our community.

**New Catalogue**

In 2021, the Huron County Library launched a new and improved *online catalogue*. 
## Virtual Services

- **Virtual Resources include:**
  - Ancestry (genealogy research)
  - Cloud Library (access to ebooks and audio books)
  - Mango Languages (language learning)
  - Hoopla (access to music, TV shows, music and more)
  - Kanopy (streaming service)
  - Flipster (access to magazines)

- 228 meetings were booked in the Library’s virtual meeting space in 2021.
- Internet hubs circulated 405 times throughout 2021.

## Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol

The Museum experienced various closures based on COVID-19 restrictions, but were able to be open for in-person visits for 184 days in 2021. During closures, staff continued to provide access to collections and research through virtual services. The Huron Historic Gaol was able to open in July 2021 offering pre-booked guided tours of the National Historic Site.

### 2021 Cultural Services: By the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digitized Newspapers available</td>
<td>545,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfect Online Artifacts available</td>
<td>6,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs (Library)*</td>
<td>5,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs (Museum)*</td>
<td>10,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum website page views</td>
<td>62,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation (items borrowed)</td>
<td>311,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Library Card Holders</td>
<td>17,030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total attendance for both virtual and in-person programs
Exhibits
This year, the Museum hosted three temporary exhibits. They each featured both in-person as well as virtual viewing and engagement opportunities:
- **McLaren Exhibit**, continued to July 17, 2021
- **Ripple Effect**, re-opened & continued through 2021
- **Forgotten**, opened September 27, 2021

Educational Programs
The Huron County Museum offers 10 different **educational programs**. Students in Huron and Perth can enjoy free access or transportation to these programs with thanks to funding from Compass Minerals.

Prisoner Profiles: Unlocking Secret Stories
**Prisoner Profiles: Unlocking Secret Stories from the Huron Historic Gaol** is a new book written by the Curator of Engagement & Dialogue. It features stories of a variety of inmates held at the Gaol.

Huron Heritage Fund
In 2021, the full $25,000 available in the **Huron Heritage Fund** was allocated to 8 successful projects. Some of the projects funded included:
- Huron Perth Junior Farmers **Farm Show**
- Bayfield Historical Society digitization of artifacts
- **Postcards from Huron County** Podcast
- Goderich Little Theatre Lobby Floor Replacement

Cultural Events
Huron County Cultural Services work to increase cultural awareness in the community. Some of the cultural projects undertaken in 2021 include:
- Working with community partners, including members of local First Nations communities, a Land Acknowledgment Statement was developed for the County of Huron.
- All departmental staff participated in training on 4 Seasons of Reconciliation.
- Staff participated in Truth and Reconciliation Day by developing book lists, wearing orange shirts and buttons, and participating in the Truth and Reconciliation walk at the Health Unit.
- Staff celebrated Pride month with colourful displays and engaging activities in the Library branches.
- Staff participated in Newcomer Welcome Week by partnering with the Immigration Partnership and hosting various author readings and events.
3. Economic Development

Recovery Team

The County of Huron is preparing for the community’s post-pandemic recovery. At the onset of the pandemic, a COVID-19 Recovery Team was developed within the Economic Development department. This team has worked to provide a variety of pandemic related supports to businesses and community members. These supports included many newsletters, toolkits, workshops and webinars. The Recovery Team also facilitated community meetings, ensuring timely and accurate information was being shared. Through multiple surveys and other forms of data collection, they’ve helped businesses and community members make informed decisions throughout the pandemic.

The County of Huron thanks the Recovery Team for their fast action and thoughtful support to the community during a time of crisis.
Business Services

The Business Center offers free one-on-one business consultations to Huron County businesses. In 2021, more than 350 business consultations were held. More than 2000 individuals participated in virtual webinars, workshops and information sessions. These numbers indicate that more than 60% of the Business Centre’s registered businesses participate in programming.

To learn more about Huron County’s business services, visit: www.HuronCounty.ca/economic-development

Funding Opportunities

Economic Development staff deliver a variety of funding programs each year. This funding supports local businesses and helps them reach their business goals.
Digital Service Squad

_Digital Service Squad_ (DSS) experts provide one-on-one assistance to small businesses in Huron County. DSS services are offered at no cost, to help businesses improve their use of digital technologies. These services were vital to the local business community during the pandemic. Businesses with a stronger online presence may be in a better position to manage service delivery changes. This meant participating business saw smooth transitions to curbside and virtual service during COVID-19 related closures.

The Digital Main Street 2.0 program ended in June after supporting 660 businesses. As a result of its success, the program was relaunched in September 2021.

Economic Development Dashboard

Launched in early 2021, Huron County’s _Economic Development Dashboard_ collects social and economic indicators from a wide variety of sources and presents them in one central location.

Immigration Partnership: Welcoming Newcomers

The _Immigration Partnership_ works to improve the experience of newcomers, including immigrants and refugees, in Huron County. Immigration Partnership staff work to:

- Improve coordination of settlement
- Assist with community integration
- Encourage community involvement

The Immigration Partnership participates in Newcomer Welcome Week. This national event is held annually in September. In 2021, the Immigration Partnership hosted and collaborated on multiple unique events. The event saw 590 views on their webpage over the course of the week.
Business Retention and Expansion Survey

Positive action is being taken to identify and meet the needs of local businesses through a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) survey. Since launching in 2021, 741 BR&E surveys have been completed. The number of businesses that responded is unprecedented and gives the department a great foundation of data to move forward on their strategic direction in 2022 and beyond.

The responses from these surveys will help guide the future work of the Economic Development department.

Tourism

As a result of the impacts of COVID-19, the Ontario’s West Coast tourism brand pivoted in 2020-2021 to focus primarily on shop local campaigns such as In Your Backyard, Huron Harvest Table, Huron Wish Book, and Hygge.

Some of the 2021 initiatives included:

- Huron County Economic Development Partnered with Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RTO4) on the Tourism Adaptation and Recovery Program which commenced in January 2021, and was funded by the Federal Economic Development Agency by Southern Ontario. In Huron County, 21 tourism businesses received funding $93,780 in funding which resulted in a project value of $359,550.
- The first Ontario’s West Coast Tourism Summit was held January 25 & 26, 2021. The two half-day session included keynote presentations by Destination Think and BC Hughes Tourism Development. 65 tourism local stakeholders attend the summit. The 2021 Ontario’s West Coast Tourism Summit was sponsored by Community Futures Huron and
- The Ontario’s West Coast Hiking Guide was updated and reprinted in spring 2021. The number of public trails listed in the newest edition of the Ontario’s West Coast Hiking Guide went from 29 to 38.
- Developed and launched the Vine & Ale Trail, a new marketing brochure promoting wineries and breweries in Huron County.
- Greetings from Ontario’s West Coast postcards. Series of six themed postcards highlighting tourism assets in Huron County directed mailed to 28,000 households.
- Huron Harvest Table a fall marketing campaign included nine cooking videos featuring locally grown and produced ingredients, a local Pie Trail.
4. Emergency Services

Community Care Team

In 2020 and 2021, Huron County Emergency Services established a specialized Community Paramedicine Team to provide additional COVID-19 care support for the community. This dedicated team received additional training, including palliative care education. This team has been working on the frontline of the County’s pandemic response, providing numerous services to Huron residents.

Community Care Team services:
- Providing community COVID-19 swabbing for pre-admission to local Hospices;
- Helping Huron-Perth Public Health and swabbing for suspected cases of COVID-19;
- Supporting local palliative care services in Huron by working with the Palliative Care Outreach Team;
- Collaborating with One Care and offering “bundled care” to individuals discharged from certain hospital sites; and
- Making sure necessary follow-up phone calls and assessments are completed after 911 calls.
2021 Emergency Services: By the Numbers

Out of the Cold: Heart to Home Emergency Shelter

The Community Care Team worked in partnership with at the Out of the Cold: Heart to Home emergency shelter. Paramedics offered shelter guests COVID-19 and influenza vaccines, and weekly wellness clinics for diabetes screening, heart disease, and hypertension.

Influenza Vaccine Mobile Clinics

The Community Care Team provided over 300 influenza vaccinations to targeted groups, including local seniors, County apartment tenants, Huron OPP, local healthcare workers, and some of Huron's most vulnerable community members.
Long-Term Care Support

In 2021, Huron County paramedics provided essential services to numerous long-term care homes experiencing increased pressures due to COVID-19. The work that County paramedics engaged in with these individual Homes proved to be a great asset to both the paramedic services team and Long-term care staff.

Long-term care homes supported by paramedics (with varying degrees of service) include:
- Bluewater Rest Home
- Exeter Villa
- Fordwich Nursing Home
- Goderich Place
- Huronlea
- Huronview
- Seaforth Manor

Mass Vaccination Clinics

Huron County Emergency Service Management held seats on the Huron Perth COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Advisory Committee as well as the HPPH Vaccination Clinic Logistic Committee. County paramedics worked closely with Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) by participating in Mass Vaccination Clinics. In total, Huron County paramedics participated in 160 vaccination clinics located throughout the County. They administered COVID-19 vaccines and provided on-site emergency medical response. For clinics not located in Goderich, the County’s Emergency Manager and/or a County paramedic provided volunteer coordinator services.

The County of Huron would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to the Emergency Services Team for the exemplary service provided during the County’s COVID-19 response.
5. Long-term Care

Increased Health and Safety

The County’s two long-term care homes, Huronview and Huronlea, experienced significant challenges in 2021. Staff in the Homes have worked in a state of constant change as they responded to the demands of COVID-19. Health and safety protocols and procedures were routinely revised. This was done in an effort to meet, or exceed, the health and safety guidelines provided by the province.

These additional health and safety requirements created increased workloads for Homes staff, but this team remain committed to providing exceptional care to residents. Throughout this challenging year, the staff at the Homes have worked incredibly hard, experienced many successes, and shared many joyful moments.
Moments of Joy and Celebration

The Programs Team was vital in 2021, keeping residents connected and engaged throughout the pandemic. The Home’s devoted significant resources to safe visitation and resident socialization. This ensured residents had many opportunities to connect with others within the parameters of pandemic protocols.

Some of the joyful events and meaningful moments included:

- **Kissing COVID Good-bye.** Residents and staff held a safe and joy-filled celebration when the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine arrived.
- **Visitation.** Family and resident visits continued with a creative approach. Visits altered between virtual, window, outdoor, indoor, and out-of-Home depending on the current guidelines.
- **Hugs for the Homes.** A series of large posters containing encouraging messages from many County staff, members of Council, and members of the community, were posted in the Homes. This campaign garnered positive media attention during a challenging time in long-term care locally and provincially.
- **Scenic Drives.** Within the limits of COVID-19, residents enjoyed weekly scenic drives around Huron County.
Courtyard Enhancements. Resident were encouraged to make use of the Homes’ outdoor spaces through capital enhancement projects that included bird feeders, raised flower beds, and additional outdoor seating.

Outdoor Concerts. To meet health and safety guidelines, residents were frequently entertained al fresco!

Drive-by Parades! The community showed an outpouring of support for Homes staff and residents through several drive-by car shows and parades.

Virtual concerts and paint nights. Volunteers engaged with residents through virtual means when visitation was limited within the Homes.

In-Home Activities. Residents were engaged with a variety in-home activities that included temporary tattoos, growing butterflies, fundraisers for the food bank, and more!

COVID-19 Outbreak-Free in 2021!

The biggest joy of all - Huronview and Huronlea remained COVID-19 outbreak-free for the entire year! Some of the efforts that ensured the Homes remained free of outbreak included:

Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). EOC meetings were held with representatives from multiple County departments.

Vaccination Clinics. Multiple vaccination clinics were held in the Homes for staff and residents.

Screening and Testing. Ongoing screening, including Rapid Antigen Testing, helped prevent COVID-19 from entering the Homes.

PPE. Homes staff met or exceeded all health and safety requirements in regards to the use of PPE and other preventative measures.

Huron County Paramedics. Paramedics provided many in-home services including screening, testing, and vaccination.

Redeployed Staff. Temporary redeployed County staff provided additional supports in the Homes. This ensured specialty and skilled staff could focus on resident care and COVID-19 prevention.
Creative Staffing Solutions

In 2021, many long-term care homes across the province experienced staffing shortages. Leadership at the Homes took an innovative and proactive approach to staffing. They developed many creative solutions. Solutions that have helped maintain adequate staffing levels throughout the pandemic.

Some of the creative solutions employed by the Homes included:

- Human Resources and Economic Development team worked with the Homes to develop and fill a contingency cook position.
- The Communications Teams worked with the Homes to develop a dynamic recruitment campaign.
- Some tasks, normally provided by staff within the Homes, were outsourced. This included meal service from One Care and cleaning from Huron Clean.
- Agency staff filled in, as required.
- Huron County Paramedics and redeployed staff assisted in the Homes.

The County of Huron thanks the staff at Huronview and Huronlea, and the County staff who lent support and helping hands to the Homes in 2021. It’s because of this collaborative effort that the County’s Homes had such a successful year.
6. Planning and Development

Planning

Huron County development applications have been steadily increasing in recent years. In 2021, the County’s Planning Department processed 364 development applications under the Planning Act (124 of those were severance applications). In addition to planning applications, final approval of 4 Plans of Subdivision and a draft approval of 7 Plans of Subdivision located across Huron County were completed.

In 2021, Planning staff hosted meetings of the Sustainable Huron Steering Committee on Waste Reduction, Attainable Housing, and Perspectives on the Future of Agriculture.

The Planning department is also responsible for implementing actions from the Huron County Cycling Strategy. In 2021, this included Bike Month education, Ontario By Bike Webinar and Advisory Committee meetings.

The Huron County Official Plan 5 Year Review update was approved by the Province and is now in effect.
2021 Planning: By the Numbers

- 364 Development applications reviewed
- 11 Plans of Subdivision received draft or final approval
- 1,500 Trees planted in collaboration with schools & landowners
- 1,600+ Acres of County owned and maintained Forest Tracts (14 locations)
- 300 Clean Water Projects approved
- $1,243,744 Value of 2021 Clean Water Projects

Water Protection

The *Huron Clean Water Project* provides financial and technical assistance to Huron County residents to improve and protect water quality in Huron County. It is funded by the County of Huron and service delivery is provided by Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley conservation authorities.

- Applications can now be submitted electronically for the *Huron Clean Water Project*. Visit the Huron County website for information, grant categories, and application form.
- Under the $450,000 allocated by Huron County, there were 300 Clean Water Projects approved for a total project value of $1,243,744.
Forestry and Stewardship

The County of Huron owns and maintains 14 forest tracts consisting of more than 1600 acres. These forests are a legacy of the reforestation effort undertaken by Ontario and Southern Ontario municipalities that began in the early 1900s. Today, these forests provide valuable sources of environmental protection, education, and recreation.

Since the onset of COVID-19, day use of the County’s forests has sharply increased. In response, the Forestry Team worked with Public Works to ensure that the trails were well maintained, parking areas were created or expanded, and access to the forests was available year round. This has ensured residents can enjoy safe and healthy outdoor recreation, even during periods of isolation.

Additional projects undertaken by the Forestry Team included:
- Monitored forest harvest activities from 140 Notices of Intent filed under the Forest Conservation By-law.
- Confirmed up to $20,000 in federal funding to develop accessible trails and parking in the Hays Tract.
- In partnership with the Huron Stewardship Council, continued administration of $223,795 for the protection of species at risk and land stewardship.
- Obtained at no cost and planted 1500 trees in collaboration with schools and private landowners.
- In partnership with the Canada Conservation Corps program, the Forestry Team provided seasonal employment for 2 youth at no cost to the County.
- Hosted meetings of the Water Protection Steering Committee covering Stewardship & Partnerships in Huron County, Pandemic Environmental Impacts; Municipal Drains, and Perspectives on the Future of Agriculture.

Climate Change and Energy

Climate change and energy are priorities for the County of Huron. The County is currently taking action to mitigate climate change and prepare for the future, as well as improve the management of energy in its facilities.

- Implemented actions from the County’s Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2020-2025).
- Developed a High Performance Building Standard to increase the efficiency and resiliency of County facilities.
- Partnered with Wellington County on a funding application to explore the development of a Regional Electric Vehicle Charging Network.
- Completed annual energy reporting for the County’s facilities, as mandated by Ontario Regulation 507/18.
7. Public Works

New Online Permit System

Public Works staff have worked hard behind the scenes with the Municipal 511 system. This work will expand services from road closures notification to include a truck permitting system. County of Huron will be one of the first Counties to offer such a service. The new online submission system will include oversized and single trip permits. It is anticipated to go live in the first half of 2022. This new service will allow trucking companies to submit permits online which will greatly speed up service delivery.

Traffic control

Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) and traffic studies were conducted on two of the County’s busiest intersections:

- **Blyth – Cr 25 and CR 4.** Study nearing completion with plans to improve intersection safety in 2023.
- **West of Exeter – CR 83 and Airport Line.** Study underway with completion in 2022 and recommendation for intersection safety improvements in 2023.
Speed Control

County Highways procured additional speed display signs to be installed at entrances to villages and towns to calm traffic and remind motorists to slow down and observe posted speed limits for improved traffic safety.

Infrastructure Improvements

Bridge Replacements

Two (circa 1948) County Road 83 bridges located between Exeter and Dashwood were replaced in 2021. County Road 83 is the busiest County Highway which services large volumes of commercial traffic through-out the County and linkages to other surrounding Counties and industries. This road is also a major arterial for summer recreational traffic, especially for weekend traffic heading towards Lake Huron and other tourist destinations.

The new bridges are concrete and expected to have a life of 75 to 100 years. This completes planned major bridge work for the next couple of decades on County Road 83.
8. Social and Property Services

Children’s Services

Working with individuals, municipalities, and agencies, Huron County Children’s Services makes sure that families and child care providers can find the early learning programs and child care support needed in the community. This team provides all children and their families easy access to:

- Parent education
- Early learning activities and resources
- Connections to other community agencies or programs
- Information on choosing a quality child care

Some of the 2021 Children’s Services highlights include:

- **Emergency Childcare.** Emergency Child Care was offered twice in 2021 to assist front-line workers during periods of virtual learning for school aged children. Through the emergency child care program, 55 children were served in January, 2021 and 194 children were served in April to June, 2021.
EarlyON Virtual Programming.
EarlyON offered families a combination of virtual programming as well as in-person programming. In 2021, the EarlyON program had 1,708 parent visits and 2,688 child visits. In addition, more than 350 make-at-home Pick-Up-Kits were delivered.

KEYON Registration System.
The implementation of the KEYON software system allows contactless sign-in to programming and data collection. Program opportunities are also displayed on a virtual calendar platform for greater awareness.

Ontario Works
Ontario Works is an Ontario-wide program that provides income and employment support to people in temporary financial need. The program combines income support with employment services and has two main components, employment assistance and financial assistance:

Some of the notable actions undertaken by the Ontario Works Team in 2021 include:

- **Electronic Document Management.** All Ontario works files were digitized and new systems were implemented for electronic file management.
- **Geographical Caseloads Established.** Caseloads were distributed based on geographical region to allow caseworkers to connect with a community and be more accessible to residents.
- **Engagement Sessions.** Engagement Sessions were held with clients, community partners and staff for Social Service Recovery and Renewal. The Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal is gradually being implemented, which will change how services are delivered and will focus on life skills.
- **Urgent Needs Funding.** Emergency Funding issued via Urgent Needs and Emergency Assistance Funding.

### Property Services

The County of Huron’s Property Services Team provide a range of services to County owned facilities including County workspaces and housing units.

Property Services provide maintenance and grounds keeping service, accessibility and efficiency upgrades, and ongoing asset management.

In 2021, this team completed:
- More than 650 preventative maintenance tasks
- More than 1300 work orders
- Refurbishing of 30 housing units
- Tendered and replaced 46 residential family unit roofs and the Historic Gaol Roof.

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### Housing Services

The County of Huron’s Social Housing Program provides a range of administrative, support, and funding services to provide affordable housing options in the County of Huron.

Available programs allow seniors to stay in their home communities, offer affordable homes to low-income families, and give disabled people independence in a safe and secure environment.

In partnership with Economic Development, Planning and the Communications Team, the Housing Team made significant strides in 2021 for homelessness in Huron County. A detailed report on housing and homelessness can be found in the priority projects section of this report.
Have Your Say!

Visit Huron County Connects to participate in projects and learn about activities, strategies and initiatives that are important to you. You can easily Have Your Say and make a difference in your own community!

Learn more: www.HuronCountyConnects.ca