



Committee Report

To: Councillor Steve Hammell, Chair and
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Mark Paoli
Director of Planning and Development

Date: February 17, 2022

Re: Economic Development Annual Report 2021

Staff Recommendation:

The Economic Development Annual Report 2021 is for information.

Background:

In November 2016, Bruce County Council adopted the “Find Yourself in Bruce County” Economic Development Strategic Plan 2017-2021. 2021 marks the final year of the plan. The Annual Report (attached) provides an update on the performance of programs and the impact they have had on Bruce communities in 2021.

Economic Development Annual Report 2021 Summary:

The report shows the overall illustration of the programs and initiatives undertaken collaboratively with municipalities to achieve economic stability and eventual recovery. In 2021, businesses worked hard to adapt to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In these tough times, the economic development programs have continued with a deep focus on business and community support measures. Some of the notable efforts were as follows:

- The Support the Bruce: Business Sustainability Fund continued to provide a unique array of supports to help businesses pivot, adapt, enhance, or reimagine their business models
- Bruce County in partnership with Grey County formulated a Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Settlement Strategy, a road map to build welcoming and inclusive communities in Grey Bruce and improve the integration of newcomers
- Continued support for tourism innovation through the Ontario Tourism Innovation Lab
- Delivery of advertising campaigns promoting sustainable tourism on the Bruce Peninsula in collaboration with local and regional partners
- The actions items outlined in the Workforce Development and Attraction Strategy continued to address the critical labour force shortage in the region
- The new 2022-2026 Bruce County Economic Development Strategic Plan was developed to guide Bruce County’s economic development in the next 5 years. The Framework for the Plan was presented to Planning and Development Committee in November 2021, and the Final Plan will be presented to Planning and Development Committee in March 2022.

Further, the report details the progress made towards community development, business attraction, and sector specific enhancements via the three signature programs - Spruce the Bruce, Business to Bruce, and Explore the Bruce. Each of these programs has a unique role and function in growing the Bruce Economy.

Spruce the Bruce

Spruce the Bruce is a community development program helping to build vibrant communities people want to call home. The program provided financial support to business owners in making modifications due to the pandemic and eliminated for the pandemic the 50 percent matching requirement for businesses. These changes were made to support local businesses and communities such as sidewalk, rooftop, back patios, installing take out windows, building additional entrances/exits, and other features to support physical distancing.

Business to Bruce

Business to Bruce is a business attraction program that focuses on inspiring, attracting, and supporting entrepreneurs to build the life and business they want. The economic development team connected with entrepreneurs in record numbers and participation in training and access to resources increased substantially. Continuing with an online platform for webinars was viewed as a positive improvement for access and convenience by clients. Also, the Business to Bruce program was audited to strengthen the program and continued to collaborate with the municipalities in achieving business development objectives.

Explore the Bruce

Explore the Bruce is the invitation to discover Bruce County. Targeting the visitor market is key to exposing audiences to the possibilities of Bruce County, the wonder and charm of its communities and the stunning natural landscapes to uncover. A renewed focus on the Explore the Bruce newsletter and dedicated resources to push messaging on all platforms meant more user awareness and engagement with Explore the Bruce. Also, the Book & Look Campaign was conceived out of a need to promote sustainable tourism on the Bruce Peninsula and reduce overcrowding at national parks and natural areas. The campaign encouraged visitors to make a parking reservation before embarking on their journey to explore Bruce County to help with the overcrowding issue. This was later expanded to include promoting tourism across the County.

The detailed Bruce County Economic Development Annual Report 2021 accompanies this report.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

None

Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Goal 3 - Find creative new ways to engage our public

Goal 6 - Explore alternate options to improve efficiency, service

Goal 7 - Stimulate and reward innovation and economic development

Report Author:

Manpreet Kaur Sangha

Economic Development Officer

Departmental Approval:

Mark Paoli

Director, Planning & Development

Approved for Submission:

Christine MacDonald

Interim Chief Administrative Officer